THE GENERAL STRIKE

R. PAGE ARNOT

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THE GENERAL STRIKE MAY 1926: ITS ORIGIN & HISTORY

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R. PAGE ARNOT

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FOREWORD

THIS book is centred upon the events of May 1st to May 12th in Great Britain in the year 1926. But the General Strike has both a past and a future. Therefore I have tried to give not only a documented chronicle of these twelve days but also a sketch of the preceding twelve months. The history of what followed after and the long struggle of the Miners from May till December is an epic outside the scope of this book. The sketch of the twelve months has been illustrated with many documents, but it is obvious that much more explanation is needed of the events of that period, much more unravelling of tangled negotiations than in the case of the General Strike, where the documents speak for themselves.

R. PAGE ARNOT

15*th December*, 1926

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PART ONE

THE NINE MONTHS

THE GENERAL STRIKE, MAY, 1926: ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Chapter I

INTRODUCTORY

About the historic importance of the British General Strike there are two conflicting views. The one is expressed most poignantly by the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, who described it as "the gravest domestic event of my lifetime." The other view treats it as no more than a sympathetic national strike, which (by accident) involved a great many unions. According to the view held, so the General Strike appears in retrospect. In the one case, in the Spring of 1926 Great Britain was "saved from revolution"; in the other, a purely industrial struggle took place on an unprecedentedly large scale. In both cases, after the struggle was past, the country returned to normal.

There is, however, a third view which, while appearing to agree with the first view as to the importance of the strike, is really in sharpest contradiction to both. For the first two views, though they differ over the General Strike, agree over the question of the Constitution. And, indeed, it is precisely because they are both strictly constitutionalist that they differ over their interpretations of the General Strike. For if the Conservatives and Liberals were right in their view of the General Strike, then the Labour Party, in so far as they did not condemn it, would have been acting unconstitutionally.

The Constitution, then, brings the first two views into a unison. The third view is not concerned with

the Constitution as such. It is concerned only to see the strike as part of history; to discover exactly what happened; to find the chain of events which led thereto; to see what light can be had by a comparison with similar events in this country (*i.e.*, 1842 Chartist Strike) or in other countries; to lay bare the social forces; to describe the relation of classes and the change of those relations; to examine the other consequences, both at home and abroad.

From this standpoint the General Strike is neither an accident nor a conspiracy. To treat it as either is to forget how frequent General Strikes are and how fully-conditioned by social developments. For General Strikes abound in the history of the last hundred years; and especially in this century. After the General Strike of 1905 in Russia and the Swedish General Strike in pre-war days, there came the great strikes of the war period occurring in every actively belligerent country, to be followed by the General Strikes at Limerick and at Winnipeg in 1919, the anti-Kapp-putsch Strike in 1920, the Indian hartals in 1921 and Rand Strike of 1922, the Ruhr General Strike of 1923, the Hong Kong General Strike of 1925—and the succession of General Strikes marking the whole Northward advance of the Revolutionary Nationalists in China.

Again in the last quarter of a century, there has been widespread amongst the working-class a theory not of General Strikes but of The General Strike. Originating in anarchist thought, and bearing a close resemblance to the National Holiday proposals of William Benbow and others in the thirties of last century, this theory found a congenial soil in the revolutionary trade unions of France from 1900 onwards. The General Strike, in this theory, had an exclusively revolutionary significance. The con-

ception was of a complete stoppage of all labour, when the workmen "with folded arms and loaded pipes" would await the surrender not of their employers only, but of the whole governing class. In the hands of various popular writers, this became more and more an apocalyptic vision of the end of bourgeois society; then it acquired an almost religious significance and was extolled by Georges Sorel as a "social myth," belief in which could inspire revolutionary activity amongst the masses and give a meaning and an aim to every partial strike. In this shape, the General Strike was readily believed in by Sorel's alarmed middle class readers who had long wondered why there always were these strikes of workmen going on. But it was not widely believed by the workers themselves. Nevertheless, while the completed theory did not even get any very wide circulation—far less credence—outside the Latin countries (except amongst those whom it frightened), it undoubtedly helped to create a strong propaganda in this country for strike action on the wildest possible scale, regarded simply as a means of winning particular strikes.

But quite apart from the widespread theory of the General Strike and the still more widespread examples of General Strikes, it requires only a very brief survey to become convinced that the General Strike of May, 1926, was neither plot nor accident, but the inevitable outcome of events and tendencies in the previous fifteen years. From many of these events it differed only in magnitude. But that difference was enormous; and because of that difference (which could only have been reached at the end of a long preparatory period) it is a turning point in the history of the British working-class.

The chain of events leading up to the General Strike, which had their root causes in economic changes

affecting the whole structure of Great Britain, can be traced from the Railway Strike of 1911 and the Coal Strike of 1912 onwards. The growth of large-scale production, the formation of trusts and monopolies, the predominance assumed by banking and finance, the action and reaction of overseas investment, had affected the British Empire and had begun to disturb the relations of the various classes and races within it. In particular, the relations between labour and capital were affected. Faced by the growth of trusts and employers' associations, the trade unions were compelled to resort to ever wider mass formations and to defensive activities on a national scale—defensive because they were called forth in response to the attack made on the livelihood of the working class by the ever-rising cost of living.

But trade union action on a nation-wide scale at once brought in a new factor. The State under the Asquith Liberal Government of 1911 participated directly in the railway strike. The State claimed to be active solely on behalf of the community, but none the less, the part it played in the strike was an effective aid to the railway companies and a blow to the strikers. From this time onwards it was clear that the sort of encounter that took place was bound to be repeated on an ever-increasing scale.

The war hastened all economic processes and political tendencies. Then from 1917 onwards, the Russian Revolution and its effect on the working classes and colonial peoples brought a new menace to the existing order in every country. From that time, great strikes were feared not simply for their own effects, but for their latent possibilities of revolution. This fear was intensified by the police strike of 1918. The year immediately after the war appeared to have brought the dreaded revolution much nearer. Ac-

cordingly, throughout that year, preparations were made by Government Departments for the enrolment of professional and middle-class associations as emergency corps to be used in the case of great strikes. The Railway Strike of September, 1919, appeared to justify the forebodings, while at the same time it afforded many useful lessons of what exactly were the strong points and the weak points in anti-strike organisations.

For twelve months and more thereafter, the preparations were steadily carried on. Reliance appeared to have been placed mainly in the military machine—war experience on the one hand and the police strike on the other, were still not yet remote.

In August, 1920, the threat of a war with Soviet Russia brought the formation of Councils of Action, both national and local. These Councils of Action were a new experience for the working-class and were regarded as a portent by the governing class. Up to this time the Defence of the Realm Act was still unrepealed ; with the end of its term approaching, a new instrument was devised. The Emergency Powers Act, to which reference is made later, was passed in the Autumn of 1920. Moreover, the police force was increased (in Great Britain from 58,957 in the 1911 census to 67,713 in the census of 1921) ; their discipline was partially militarised, and by the recommendations of the Desborough Committee, the local forces were to be brought under central control. Throughout all this period the main concrete form assumed by the danger was the Triple Industrial Alliance, composed of Miners, Railwaymen and Transport Workers. This organisation, however, collapsed in the first weeks of the Mining Lockout that began in March, 1921 ; and with the disastrous effects of that lockout—effects common to all organised labour, with the diminishing

membership of the trade unions and with the growth of unemployment (the figure never below a million from 1921 to the present day), the situation appeared to be eased.

But the process of economic change which had produced the situation did not cease. Indeed, the series of changes had now gone on until a new stage could be definitely stated to have been reached. The war had altered the balance of forces in the world markets and in world economy, and had altered them to the disadvantage of the British Empire. The real victors in the war appeared to be the U.S.A. and Japan. The extent of the change in the position of the British Empire is illustrated by the Washington Conference of 1921. America was there able, in virtue of her supreme strength, to break the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance and to displace the British Navy from its proud position of superiority, and (a little later) to compel the annual tribute of debt payments from Britain. But the internal economic alterations in the British Empire are of more immediate importance.

The process of industrialisation throughout the Empire, the accompanying growth of new classes of capitalists in the dominions and dependencies, the movement of revolt amongst the colonial peoples, together with a more and more strident assertion of practical independence by the dominions, did away with the system by which the imperial power centred in the City of London was able "to hold the gorgeous East in fee" and from its enormous receipts to spare relatively high wages to the working class at home. In spite of the City sharing out with the new classes of capitalists, in spite of bargains like the treaty setting up the Irish Free State, the dyarchy in India, the ostensible restoration of Egyptian independence, etc., etc., this situation marked at once a decline in the

fortunes of British Imperialism and a beginning of a revolutionary process amongst the British working class. The capitalists sought a solution for their difficulties in the lengthening of hours and a lowering of the wages of the working class. The steady pressure on the livelihood of the workers—since called " the Employers' Offensive "—began in the Spring of 1921 and has continued since then. The lockout of the Engineers in 1922 followed the Miners' Lockout of 1921. It was not by chance that these two industries bore the brunt of the employers' offensive. For it was precisely in those products that the changes in world economy had left British capitalism in a disadvantageous position, a position accentuated by the obsolete economic structure of those industries. Attacks on these two industries were succeeded again by smaller reductions in one trade after another. To the cost measured in reductions in wages there must be added the lowering of standards caused by the almost continuous short time experienced by cotton and certain other industries. Luxury trades, distributive trades and transport services alone shewed no slackening. The slump in staple industries continued.

While events from 1911 onwards produced a state of preparedness in the minds of the governing class, and a purposeful organisation to meet the new conditions, a similar but much less conscious response was slowly being evoked on the side of Labour. This growing political consciousness, this dawning recognition of their altered position and the struggle that was being forced upon them found expression in two ways. On the one hand, the change they desired was sought through the medium of the Labour Party, which received accessions of strength at each General Election—1918, 1922, 1923—and culminated for the time being in the formation of the MacDonald Government.

On the other hand, an attempt was made to modernise the equipment of the trade unions. Amalgamations of competing unions were gradually carried through and a common centre for all the unions was sought in the formation of a General Council, which should co-ordinate trade union activities and give an expression to, and be an instrument for, purposes that were more and more felt to be the common purposes of trade unionism. But this growing political consciousness, finding expression in these two ways, was still confused and limited. The type of Parliamentary party, the type of party leaders, the type of trade union machinery and the type of trade union bureaucrats and secretaries produced through that machinery, were still of the kind adapted primarily for the pre-war conditions of the struggle.

Chapter II

THE PARTIES TO THE DISPUTE

A chronicle of events of the General Strike, together with the nine months that preceded it and the six months that followed, brings under survey various bodies and institutions whose composition and function are taken for granted in the daily references to them in the newspaper press. This taking-for-granted attitude of mind frequently covers many erroneous assumptions. It is well, therefore, at the beginning of this chronicle to set forth some of the institutions and bodies that played their parts in the General Strike and to explain exactly what they are. Let us deal then with Parliament and Government on the one hand and with the various trade union bodies on the other.

Parliament and Government

Any attempt to describe the British Parliament is beset by a maze of legal forms and text-book notions of an imaginary Constitution. This confusion is partly due to the fact that there is both an antique theory of the Constitution and a modern theory of the Constitution. Thus the text-books tell us that the apparatus of government is the King in Parliament (King, Lords and Commons), the King in Council (for particular or extraordinary legislation), and his Majesty's Judges. Now it is obvious that a description that applies both to the thirteenth and the twentieth centuries can have little reality about it, and is, indeed, hardly more than evidence of the continuity of the outward shows and ceremonies. On the other hand, the modern theory, which has grown up mainly since

the French Revolution, is no less incomplete. This theory is that the House of Commons is supreme; that the House of Commons is elected by the free and equal citizens of the country who have the final say in all matters of Government; while, for the purpose of choosing their Members of Parliament, these citizens are divided into constituencies. Now, clearly, this modern theory is not an adequate description. It takes no account of the existence of political parties and classes, or of the fact that the great industrial combines, on the one hand, and the great trade unions, on the other, regularly send their representatives to Parliament. It conflicts with the antique theory of the Constitution; it also conflicts with the modern realities. To get any real description of Parliament or of the Government of the country the analysis must go deeper. For instance, it must at least show what interests are represented in Parliament, and how those interests are combined in parties. The question of what constituency will be arranged for the representative of a particular interest is of a much lesser importance.

The old legal form, it must be noted, contains within itself the history of Parliament—from its birth in the middle ages through its capture and subjugation in the seventeenth century by the rising middle class, up to these latter days of capitalism when it still at least registers the decisions of those who hold the reins of government.

For in the last hundred years capitalism has passed through many changes. The typical representatives of capital now are the great monopolies and the international financiers, and the House of Commons has changed its colour accordingly. Again, the increased concentration of power in the hands of a financial oligarchy finds a parallel concentration of power in

the State. With the Party system and the increasing status of the Premier, power has been concentrated in the Cabinet, a committee of the Privy Council, which is not only the Executive, composed of Ministers of the Crown, but also the body that decides what the House of Commons shall do, and how it shall do it. The old form says that a member shall ask leave of the House to bring in a Bill; the reality is seen in the appeal by that member to the Cabinet to allow facilities for the passage of a Bill.

The dominant position held by finance capital* can be measured in a curious way. That is by its effect on the vestige of feudal times, the House of Lords. There is no longer any question of the House of Lords representing Norman blood or generations of titled ancestors. The men who sit on the red benches are financiers like Lord Rothschild and Lord Swaythling; captains of industry like Lord Inverforth or Lord Inchcape; magnates like Lord Vestey of the meat trust, or Lord Gainford the mineowner; and, finally, millionaire newspaper proprietors like Lord Riddell, Lord Beaverbrook and Lord Rothermere.

But though the representatives of Big Business have captured both the Commons and the Lords, their power does not reside there or depend upon this capture. This generation, which has seen a newspaper make and unmake a Government, has no illusions on that score. Just as the King lost all his personal power and became the mere façade of the structure of Government, so the whole of Parliament has become a façade behind which go on the operations of finance capital and the real Government of the country. But in each case the façade is for use as well as for ornament.

*It is interesting to recall the minatory tones in which the *Fianacial Times* expostulated with a certain Minister at a time when there was a slight difference of opinion between the Government

Let us turn to the form of Government known as the King in Council. Its origin and history are still a subject of investigation, but at one time the King in his Privy Council appeared to be about to supplant the Parliament. Under the Stuarts and Tudors, it was the instrument of their centralising Government. From the point of view of the monarchy, the Privy Council, composed of Councillors who were responsible not to constituencies, but only to the King (and bound to him by a special oath), had obvious conveniences.

After the Revolution of 1688, the Privy Council was shorn of much of its power and was subordinated to Parliament in practice, though its exact status was never exhaustively set forth. The growth of the Cabinet, which was at once a Committee of the Privy Council and the group of the chiefs of the majority in the House of Commons, appeared to have brought reciprocal working into these two engines of Government.

During the Napoleonic wars, the Privy Council was once more used as a formidable engine of Government, and by the famous Orders in Council, Pitt and his successors were able to meet Napoleon with swift and arbitrary decrees. After the Napoleonic wars, the position of the form of Government known as the King in Council had been clearly defined, and it was possible to regard it as a reserve instrument to meet great occasions.

Of these, the greatest occasion was the outbreak of war in 1914. The declaration of war was followed by the passing of the Defence of the Realm Act, by the first clause of which power was given to His

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and the Banks. "Does he, and do his colleagues, realise that 'half-a-dozen men' at the top of the five big banks could upset the whole fabric of Government finance by refraining from renewing Treasury bills?"—*Financial Times*, Sept. 20th, 1921.

Majesty in Council to take the necessary measures to secure the safety of the Realm. These powers, primarily exercised through the Privy Council in the shape of Orders in Council, were transferable to each Government Department; which thus acquired the power to legislate by the simple method of publishing its regulation in the *London Gazette*. For six years the country was governed by the principal Officers of State, acting through the Privy Council. As Maitland says, "A meeting of the King with just a few of its members selected by him is a meeting of the Privy Council, and a resolution passed at such a meeting and published, is an Order in Council." After the war the great strikes of 1919 were met by Government organisation, which had behind it, in reserve, the powers given by the Defence of the Realm Act. Within a year or two of the armistice, the regulations of the Defence of the Realm Act were being so rapidly repealed and the end of the Act was itself so soon approaching, that it was considered necessary to have another Act which would enable the form of Government, known as the King in Council, to be brought into action with the maximum of speed and without any possible constitutional objection being raised. It is probable that action in the case of the great strikes could be taken without special legislation. It was so taken by the South African Government when in 1914 the leaders of the strike were deported in the steamship 'Umgeni.' But the matter had raised many questionings, and it was considered better to have an explicit Act of Parliament. This Act was passed in the autumn of 1920, under the title of the Emergency Powers Act. Unlike the Defence of the Realm Act, it did not refer to a specific occasion which had arisen, but was contrived to meet occasions which might arise in future.

If the Government of the day considers that there is a State of Emergency, a meeting of the Privy Council is summoned, consisting of two or three people, and the King, by a proclamation, declares that a State of Emergency exists. Immediately thereafter it becomes lawful for His Majesty in Council 'by Order to make regulations for securing the essentials of life to the community.' Again, powers and duties can be given by Order in Council to the Government Departments to make regulations, to create new classes of offences and to prescribe penalties therefor. The traditional 'rights of the subject' are taken away. In a sense it becomes a declaration of 'All power to the police!' The Proclamation has to be renewed each month and the Orders in Council and regulations are periodically brought under review by Parliament. But this is a mere form. In effect, the country is subjected to a regime corresponding to a state of siege.

Besides these special powers granted to the regular servants and officers of His Majesty, an additional apparatus of Emergency Officers is created. The country is divided into some ten or twelve districts, each under a Civil Commissioner, who, together with his officers, possesses dictatorial powers and works in conjunction with the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, while right down to the smallest units of local government a special organisation for enforcing the Emergency Powers Act is set up. Arrest and imprisonment on a large scale is made easy.

The text of the Emergency Powers Act is printed at the end of this chapter.

Last in the triple structure of Government come His Majesty's Judges. The same change which left the Privy Council shorn of its other functions, deprived it of judicial powers as well. While the judiciary, it was understood, were completely separate from the

other functions of Government, this separation was never carried so far as in the triple distinction of legislative, executive and judicial set forth in the Constitution of the U.S.A. But it is nevertheless put forward as a theory. In point of fact, the judges are appointed for life. They are secure from the breath of popular favour, they have no constituency to look to and their activities are subject to supervision only in the form of appeals. With them, we may take the subordinate salaried magistracy in London and throughout the country. The work of this large body of persons together with their officers is little discussed. What criticism has been put forward is met with resentment—which can sometimes make itself severely felt—and not with counter arguments as is customary in the House of Commons. Discussion of the behaviour of a judge during a case is an offence known as " contempt of court," heavily punishable by fine or by imprisonment. Discussion after the sentence has been passed can be construed as one of the forms of seditious libel. Both in the ordinary conduct of affairs, but especially in times of civil tumult, the judiciary and magistracy play an extremely important part. At the moment, they belong to one class; and in so far as their severe legal training has not eradicated their prejudices, that prejudice is likely to shew itself in a bias against the working class. When one goes to the unpaid magistracy, the Justices of the Peace, where no legal training is necessary, the class bias becomes evident in almost every utterance and decision given. Like the Privy Councillor, the Justice of Peace incurs a special responsibility and takes a special oath. That this oath and this responsibility are not a matter of form was shewn in the summer of 1926, when several Labour Justices of the Peace were deprived of their commission on the ground

that they had done things unbecoming their office and their oath.

TRADE UNIONS

If an explanation of Government suffers from conflicting theories, any attempt to explain trade unions suffers from the difficulty of there being no theory at all. Trade unions do not readily fit into legalistic theory. The lawyers have put forward no theory at all of something so anomalous, something so foreign to the legalistic conception of English society. Indeed, by the common law, a trade union is considered an unlawful body, in so far as its object is to act in restraint of trade. A trade union, being unincorporated, is something of a puzzle. It does not fit into the scheme of things.

Not only is there no detailed theory of the rights and scope of trade unions, but the practice varies from country to country and from decade to decade. Thus in Japan, Government servants have the right to be organised in trade unions, but those trade unions of State employees must be kept entirely separate from the employees of private employers. In Britain, on the other hand, the Post Office workers (to take one example) are organised along with the other trade unionists, but they have voluntarily deprived themselves of the power to strike. The status of trade unionism varies from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, where they stand in a privileged position, to the Kingdom of Egypt where they are practically suppressed.

The dearth at once of theory and of uniformity of practice on which a theory could be based, is relieved only by certain statutes in the case of Britain. This brief series of statutes begins with the legalisation of trade unions as such by the repeal of the Combination

Laws in 1824-25, and after a number of Acts in the middle of the 19th century, of which the Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1876 are the most conspicuous, it reaches its end in the Trade Disputes Act of 1906 and the Trade Union Act of 1913. These laws stand out like liberties and franchises of the middle ages as something won for a new order of society in the middle of the old order and in the teeth of its opposition.

Of these laws, the most important is the "Act to provide for the regulation of Trade Unions and Trade Disputes," commonly called the Trade Disputes Act, in which, under the heading "peaceful picketing" there was the following clause :—

"It shall be lawful for one or more persons, acting on their own behalf or on behalf of a trade union or of an individual employer or firm in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides or works or carries on business or happens to be, if they so attend merely for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information, or of peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working."

In the war waged between the lawyers and the Trade Unions in the fight for their recognition of themselves and of their activities as legitimate, the Trade Disputes Act represents as it were a salient pushed forward into the enemy territory. In the 20 years that followed the passage of this Act, there was a continual attrition, so that a process of disintegration of the Trade Disputes Act could be said to have been going on all the time. In the rapid economic changes of modern times the Trade Disputes Act must be regarded as relatively an old and worn Act. In a sense, the struggle between the trade unions and the Government in 1926 resolved itself on the legal arena into a struggle between the waning powers of the Trade

Disputes Act to protect the trade unions in the exercise of their activities and the new and more vigorous provisions of the Emergency Powers Act. It is true that this inevitable clash between these two statutes was felt at the time of the passage of the Emergency Powers Act ; and it was in response to fears expressed by trade union officials that the following clause was inserted in the Emergency Powers Act :—

" Provided also that no such regulation shall make it an offence for any person or persons to take part in a strike or peacefully to persuade any other person or persons to take part in a strike."

Between this clause of the Emergency Powers Act, which expressly legalised (and appeared to reinforce the Trade Disputes Act in legalising) ordinary trade union strike action, and the remainder of the clauses of the Emergency Powers Act and still more with its execution and its general tenor there was obvious conflict. It is perhaps doubtful if every action undertaken by those operating the Emergency Powers Act was legal. But the Emergency Powers Act had this advantage over the Trade Disputes Act that it *ex-hypothesi* had behind it the whole force of the Government with the possibility in the background of indemnity acts for any action where any over-zealous officials might have overstepped the bounds of legality. In theory, the laws are equal. In practice, the Emergency Powers Act carried many more guns than the Trade Disputes Act.

The Trade Disputes Act is set out at the end of the chapter.

We are not concerned here with exhaustive argument on the status of trade unionism, nor can we go in detail into the organisation of their societies. But the structure of the Miners' Union, that was the centre

of the British stage in 1925 and the centre of the world stage in 1926, must be given in some detail.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain is a Federation of some score of trade unions, covering the British coalfields. Of these, the largest are South Wales, Yorkshire, Durham, Scotland, and Lancashire and Cheshire. Several of these constituent county associations of miners are themselves, either in name or in fact, federations of smaller unions. These county associations, and also the smaller unions of which they may be composed, are built up from the Miners' Lodge, the lodge, in most cases, corresponding to the single pit. This is the basic unit of the industry.

The full list of affiliated Unions, together with their representation on the Federation Executive and their 1925 membership figures is as follows :—

Scotland (2),	... ...	80,000
Durham (3),	... ...	120,000
Northumberland (1),	... ...	38,803
Yorkshire (3),	... ...	140,000
Lancashire (2),	... ...	75,000
Nottinghamshire (1),	... ...	25,000
Derbyshire (1),	... ...	35,000
Midlands (2),	... ...	60,000
South Wales (4),	... ...	149,000

GROUP No. I.

Enginemen, Cokemen,	(1)	... ...	19,600 4,200

GROUP No. II.

Cleveland,	(1)	... ...	5,000
Cumberland,		... ...	8,500
North Wales,		... ...	10,000
Leicester,		... ...	7,900

GROUP No. III.

South Derby,		... ...	6,000
Forest of Dean,		... ...	5,000
Somerset,	(1)	... ...	5,000
Bristol,		... ...	1,900
Kent,		... ...	1,600
			797,703

The Midland Miners' Federation is itself made up of the following seven trade unions :—

Pelsall Miners' Association.
Cannock Miners' Association.
North Staffs Miners' Association.
South Staffs and East Worcestershire Miners' Assoc.
Warwick Miners' Association.
Shropshire Miners' Association.
West Midlands Miners' Association.

Similarly, the National Union of Scottish Mineworkers is made up of county unions retaining to a large degree their own autonomy ; and in the South Wales Miners' Federation the District Organisations of the valleys are in many respects autonomous.

The stated objects of the Federation are simply :—

(*a*) To provide funds to carry on the business of the Federation.
(*b*) To safeguard and promote the industrial and trade interests of the affiliated membership.
(*c*) To provide funds to safeguard and promote the political and legislative interests of the affiliated membership.

But since the formation of the Federation in 1889, its aims have been—decrease of hours of labour in the mines, the maintenance and improvement of their working conditions including wages, the securing of better terms of workmen's compensation, the increase

of safety in the mines, the representation of the miners' interests in Parliament and the Nationalisation of the mines and minerals.

The machinery of the Federation is composed of National Officials, Executive Committee, Annual and Special Conferences. The National Officials are Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary, the first three being chosen from the National Executive. The Secretary of the Federation is a permanent official, but is also a member of the Executive. He is elected directly by ballot of the 800,000 members of the Federation.

Between conferences, the conduct of the business of the Miners' Federation is vested in an Executive Committee, consisting of some 20 members. The Executive Committee is responsible to the Delegate Conference, consisting of nearly 200 delegates, elected under varying rules from the County Associations. " It shall also be the duty of the Executive Committee," says the rule, " to advise the Districts or Conferences from time to time as to what should be done in connection with any great national issue before the Federation."

The Annual Conference, held each July, is a conference of the 20 constituent trade unions, who usually send their chief officials and, in addition, a certain number of working miners selected for this purpose. Of recent years the urgency of events has compelled policy to be shaped more and more at the Special Conferences.

For purposes of policy, the Delegate Conference is the sovereign governing body ; but this sovereignty is limited in two ways. First, on supremely important questions, such as the declaration of a strike or the termination of either a strike or a lockout, the membership of the Federation is consulted by means of a

ballot-vote. Secondly, there has, in recent times, been an increasing tendency to confirm important decisions of the Delegate Conference by a reference back to the Districts for final ratification. In at least one instance during the struggle of 1926—the acceptance of the Bishops' Memorandum—this ratification was withheld.

Thus the policy of the Miners' Federation is, to a degree uncommon in British trade unionism, determined by the working miners themselves.

On the other hand, the force of this control by the working miners is not exercised directly on the national field, but is canalised through the machinery of separate independent county trade unions. The county associations are in most cases older than the Federation; they have their own traditions, history and customs; they have a full-sized administrative machine (the separate Secretaryship and Head Office of the M.F.G.B. were not set up till 1919), and their own finances, accumulated funds, contributions, benefits, etc. Whereas they are supposed to receive contributions of not less than a shilling per week from the members, the payment to the National Federation is only sixpence a year for each member.

All these things tend to emphasise the federal nature of the M.F.G.B.; and to make it more of an alliance of mining unions than a strongly knit centralised body. The members of the Executive Committee sit there not so much as responsible for the whole of the minefields as ambassadors representing the separate county associations.

Against these centrifugal forces, there is working the pressure of the employers, which (though they, the employers, are designedly organised in districts) is exerted on national, and, in recent years especially, on an international scale. But, as yet, the secretary-

ship (elected directly by the whole membership) is almost the only symbol of the tendency towards unification.

The Miners' Federation is linked, together with over 200 other unions, in the Trades Union Congress, to which it contributes 3d per member per annum. For 52 out of the 58 years of its existence, the Trades Union Congress was nothing more than an annual assembly of delegates from trade unions, who met to pass resolutions and who, for the purpose of placing these resolutions before Ministers, elected a Standing Committee called the Parliamentary Committee.

In 1920 the T.U.C. created a General Council, with powers going considerably beyond those formerly possessed by the Parliamentary Committee. The creation of this General Council effected a corresponding change in the assembly which gave it birth, so that the Congress has come progressively to assume the character of a Federation. The constitution of this federal body is still in process of growth and depends as much upon events as on formal powers. For some time there has been a struggle between left and right on the question of what powers shall be explicitly vested in the General Council. The significant features of the Standing Orders of the Congress are as follows :—

The General Council, elected by Congress, is composed of 32 members representing 18 trade groups. It is laid down that amongst the duties of the General Council it shall promote common action by the trade union movement on general questions, such as wages and hours of labour, and any matter of general concern that may arise between trade unions and trade unions or between employers and trade unions, or between the trade union movement and the Government, and shall have power to

assist any union which is attacked on any vital question of trade union principle.

Again, under the heading of Industrial Disputes, it is laid down in a very important clause that :—

Where the Council intervenes, as herein provided, and the union or unions concerned accept the assistance and advice of the Council, and where, despite the efforts of the Council, the policy of the employers enforces a stoppage of work by strike or lockout, the Council shall forthwith take steps to organise on behalf of the union or unions concerned all such moral and material support as the circumstances of the dispute may appear to justify.

In the discussion which took place at the Trades Union Congress at Scarborough, 1925, it was sought to give the General Council greater power, or, at any rate, to set forth its powers in a more explicit manner. Nothing, however, came of this, and in the period under review, the clause just quoted is the one under which the General Council operated.

Most of the trade unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress are also affiliated to the Labour Party, which contains, in addition, local labour bodies known as Local Labour Parties (or in some cases as Trades and Labour Councils) together with affiliated socialist societies, such as the I.L.P. In being thus composed largely of trade unions (which must have taken a statutory ballot provided for in the Trade Union Act of 1913 before they could affiliate), the Labour Party differs from other political parties in Britain or in most other parts of the world.

Means for consultation between these national bodies are provided for by what is called the National Joint Committee, consisting of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the Executive Com-

mittee of the Labour Party and the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party, which gives the parliamentarians a two to one majority at each Joint Committee meeting.

Just as the trade unions are nationally linked up in the Trades Union Congress, so the local branches of trade unions are linked together in each locality in a Trades Council composed of branch delegates. The constitutions of these bodies vary. In some cases they are separate from the Local Labour Parties, in other cases they are amalgamated with them. Their activities and their influence have been growing steadily in recent years and the companion volume to this history of the General Strike is devoted to their activities during the General Strike.

The coalowners, corresponding to the trade unions, are banded together in district associations. These district associations, either singly or in groups, negotiate with the mining trade unions. The District Associations of Coalowners are further united in the Mining Association of Great Britain, which originally had no negotiating powers in industrial matters, but existed mainly for parliamentary purposes. In recent years, however, the ever-extending scope of industrial disputes has compelled negotiations to be set up on a national scale between the Mining Association of Great Britain on the one hand and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain on the other. The agreement of 1921, and the revised agreement of 1924, were concluded between these two bodies as plenipotentiary for their respective sides. The Mining Association of Great Britain does not include some of the largest trustified concerns. Indeed, it may be said that it does not represent the industry as a whole, but rather represents the single owner multiplied a thousand times.

DOCUMENTS

D.1.

EMERGENCY POWERS ACT.

(10 & 11 Geo. 5, Chapter 55).

An Act to make exceptional provision for the Protection of the Community in cases of Emergency (29th October, 1920).

Be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

1.—(1) If at any time it appears to His Majesty that any action has been taken or is immediately threatened by any persons or body of persons of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated, by interfering with the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community, or any substantial portion of the community, of the essentials of life, His Majesty may, by proclamation (hereinafter referred to as a proclamation of emergency) declare that a state of emergency exists.

No such proclamation shall be in force for more than one month, without prejudice to the issue of another proclamation, at or before the end of that period.

(2) Where a proclamation of emergency has been made, the occasion thereof shall forthwith be communicated to Parliament, and, if Parliament is then separated by such adjournment or prorogation as will not expire within five days, a proclamation shall be issued for the meeting of Parliament within five days, and Parliament shall accordingly meet and sit upon the day appointed by that proclamation, and shall continue to sit and act in like manner as if it had stood adjourned or prorogued to the same day.

2.—(1) Where a proclamation of emergency has been made, and so long as the proclamation is in force, it shall be lawful for His Majesty in Council, by Order, to make regulations for securing the essentials of life to the community, and those regulations may confer or impose on a Secretary of State or other Government department, or any other persons in His Majesty's service or acting on His Majesty's behalf, such powers and duties as His Majesty may deem necessary for the preservation of the peace, for securing and regulating the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, light, and other necessities, for maintaining the means of transit or locomotion, and for any other purposes essential to the public safety and the life of the community, and may make such provisions incidental to the powers aforesaid as may appear to His Majesty to be required for making the exercise of those powers effective :

Provided that nothing in this Act shall be construed to authorise the making of any regulations imposing any form of compulsory military service or industrial conscription :

Provided also that no such regulation shall make it an offence

for any person or persons to take part in a strike, or peacefully to persuade any other person or persons to take part in a strike.

(2) Any regulations so made shall be laid before Parliament as soon as may be after they are made, and shall not continue in force after the expiration of seven days from the time when they are so laid unless a resolution is passed by both Houses providing for the continuance thereof.

(3) The regulations may provide for the trial, by courts of summary jurisdiction, of persons guilty of offences against the regulations; so, however, that the maximum penalty which may be inflicted for any offence against any such regulations shall be imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term of three months, or a fine of one hundred pounds, or both, such imprisonment and fine, together with the forfeiture of any goods or money in respect of which the offence has been committed: Provided that no such regulation shall alter any existing procedure in criminal cases, or confer any right to punish by fine or imprisonment without trial.

(4) The regulations so made shall have effect as if enacted in this Act, but may be added to, altered, or revoked by resolution of both Houses of Parliament or by regulations made in like manner or subject to the like provisions as the original regulations; and regulations made under this section shall not be deemed to be statutory rules within the meaning of section one of the Rules Publication Act, 1893.

(5) The expiry or revocation of any regulations so made shall not be deemed to have affected the previous operation thereof, or the validity of any action taken thereunder, or any penalty or punishment incurred in respect of any contravention or failure to comply therewith, or any proceeding or remedy in respect of any such punishment or penalty.

3.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Emergency Powers Act, 1920.

(2) This Act shall not apply to Ireland.

D.2.

TRADE DISPUTES ACT, 1906.

(6 Edw. 7, Chapter 47).

An Act to provide for the regulation of Trades Unions and Trade Disputes, 21st December, 1906.

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. The following paragraph shall be added as a new paragraph after the first paragraph of section three of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875:—

"An act done in pursuance of an agreement or combination by two or more persons shall, if done in contemplation

or furtherance of a trade dispute, not be actionable unless the act, if done without any such agreement or combination, would be actionable."

2. (1) It shall be lawful for one or more persons, acting on their own behalf or on behalf of a trade union or of an individual employer or firm in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute, to attend at or near a house or place where a person resides or works or carries on business or happens to be, if they so attend merely for the purpose of peacefully obtaining or communicating information, or of peacefully persuading any person to work or abstain from working.

(2) Section seven of the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, is hereby repealed from " attending at or near " to the end of the section.

3. An act done by a person in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute shall not be actionable on the ground only that it induces some other person to break a contract of employment of some other person, or with the right of some other person to dispose of his capital or his labour as he wills.

4. (1) An action against a trade union, whether of workmen or masters, or against any members or officials thereof on behalf of themselves and all other members of the trade union in respect of any tortious act alleged to have been committed by or on behalf of the trade union, shall not be entertained by any court.

(2) Nothing in this section shall affect the liability of the trustees of a trade union to be sued in the events provided for by the Trade Union Act, 1871, section 9, except in respect of any tortious act committed by or on behalf of the union in contemplation or in furtherance of a trade dispute.

5. (1) This Act may be cited as the Trade Disputes Act, 1906, and the Trade Union Acts, 1871 and 1876, and this Act may be cited together as the Trade Union Acts, 1871 to 1906.

(2) In this Act, the expression " trade union " has the same meaning as in the Trade Union Acts, 1871 and 1876, and shall include any combination as therein defined, notwithstanding that such combination may be the branch of a trade union.

(3) In this Act and in the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875, the expression " trade dispute " means any dispute between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen, which is connected with the employment or non-employment or the terms of the employment, or with the conditions of labour, of any person, and the expression " workmen " means all persons employed in trade or industry, whether or not in the employment of the employer with whom a trade dispute arises ; and, in section three of the last-mentioned Act, the words, " between employers and workmen " shall be repealed.

Chapter III

RED FRIDAY

It was on 30th June, 1925, that the owners gave notice in a letter from the Mining Association of Great Britain, that they wished to terminate the National Wages Agreement, which had been in force since 18th June, 1924. The notice was to run for the month of July, 1925, and to terminate at midnight on the 31st of that month. The next day (1st July) the Mining Association of Great Britain forwarded their proposals for the New Wages Agreement. Into the extremely complicated arithmetic of the terms of that Agreement we need not enter now.

The Miners' Conference of July 3rd decided they could not accept the proposals. A week later a discussion with the Right Hon. W. C. Bridgeman, M.P., advanced the matter no further. Meantime the miners had placed their case before the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. The attitude of the General Council is fully expressed in the following statement issued to the press :—

D.3.

July 11th, 1925.

"The General Council of the Trades Union Congress, at a special meeting on the 10th July, met the full Executive Council of the Miners' Federation.

The position in relation to the impending dispute in the coal-mining industry was exhaustively reviewed, and a very detailed and explicit statement of the causes of the deadlock was made on behalf of the Miners' Federation.

Subsequent to the miners' representatives leaving the meeting, the General Council conferred privately and passed a resolution recording their complete support of

the miners, and undertook to co-operate whole-heartedly with them in their resistance to the degradation of the standard of life of their members.

The General Council are emphatically convinced that the action of the Mining Association in giving notice to terminate the existing agreement is directly responsible for precipitating the crisis, particularly at a time when a Joint Committee of the mineowners and the workers was still investigating proposed remedies for the trade depression in the coalfields.

The terms put forward by the Mining Association for a revised agreement propose drastic reductions in the already meagre wages paid to the miners, abolish the principle of the minimum wage, destroy the principle of national agreements, make the national unification of the industry an impossibility, and would, if carried to their logical conclusion, eventually lead to settlements between individual companies and their workers and cause chaos within the industry.

The General Council appreciate to the full the fact that no self-respecting body of organised workers could negotiate on such terms, and they completely endorse the refusal of the Miners' Federation to meet the owners until the proposals have been withdrawn.

The General Council particularly approve of the steadfast opposition of the Miners' Federation to any proposals for a lengthened working day, and deplore the misrepresentation which has led the public to assume that the seven-hour day represents the actual length of the miners' time underground. All those connected with the industry are aware that, in addition to the seven hours actually spent at the coal face, the time occupied in lowering and raising the miners to the surface and travelling underground makes the working day in reality equivalent, on the average, to more than eight hours per day.

The General Council are confident they will have the backing of the whole organised Trade Union movement in placing themselves without qualification and unreservedly at the disposal of the Miners' Federation to assist the Federation in any way possible.

A Committee, consisting of Mr. J. Bromley, M.P., Mr. A. Hayday, M.P., Mr. G. Hicks, Mr. J. Marchbank, Mr. E. L. Poulton, Mr. Ben Tillett, Mr. G. Walkden, together with Mr. A. B. Swales (Chairman) and Mr. W. M. Citrine (Assistant Secretary), has been appointed to maintain continuous contact with the negotiations now taking place, and with power to summon the full General Council in the event of the necessity arising."

It will be noticed that the General Council could say :—

" they completely endorse the refusal of the Miners' Federation to meet the owners until the proposals have been withdrawn."

Further, they " passed a resolution recording their complete support of the miners, and undertook to co-operate wholeheartedly with them in their resistance to the degradation of the standard of life of their members."

On the same day as the press statement quoted above was issued, the Ministry of Labour took the decision to appoint a Court of Inquiry under the Industrial Courts Act, 1919, to inquire into the cause and circumstances of the dispute.

The Annual Conference of the Miners' Federation had now begun. At this Conference a letter from the Ministry of Labour was received asking that the Miners should attend the Court of Inquiry. The following Resolution (endorsed by the Annual Conference on July 15th) was the reply :—

D.4.

" The Executive Committee recommend the Conference to inform the Government that it can accept no Court of Inquiry that has for its object the ascertainment of whether mine-workers' wages can be reduced or their hours extended, as these questions were fully discussed at the last inquiry ; the Executive Committee further recommends that we repeat our willingness to meet the coalowners in

open conference as soon as they have withdrawn their proposals."

In a letter sent on the same day, Mr. A. J. Cook, Secretary of the Miners' Federation, made the following point amongst others :—

"In regard to the particular inquiry now set up, I have to say that it certainly can take no part in proceedings, which, from the terms of reference and the constitution of the Court, are so obviously designed to justify the present attack upon the mine-workers' standard of living, and in respect of which it was in no way consulted. The Federation, however, is perfectly willing to meet the mineowners again, in open conference, if and when the present proposals are withdrawn."

The Court of Inquiry formally sent letters repeating the invitation to give evidence. The miners did not budge. The Court of Inquiry, presided over by Mr. H. P. MacMillan, went on to take evidence in the absence of the miners. The whole of its subsequent proceedings interested the miners and other workers very little and had a very small effect on later developments. It may be noted that their Report, issued on 28th July, was so round with the mineowners, that the *Times*, in its first leading article, made it the basis for assuming that the mineowners would now withdraw their proposals. The first part of the Editorial is reprinted in the Appendices.

A fortnight had now elapsed since the Miners had first met the Government and the General Council. On the 24th July, the occasion was taken of a special Trade Union Congress on Unemployment, held in London, for Mr. Herbert Smith and Mr. A. J. Cook to put the position in detail before their fellow trade-unionists. Accompanying their speeches was a document in which the Miners' Federation very clearly and unequivocally set forth the exact situation. It

covered the economic position of the mining industry, the owners' wage proposals, the court of inquiry, and finally put the issue of the whole trade union movement joining in the impending struggle. This document is reproduced among the Appendices to this chapter.

It is worth while, however, to quote here the conclusion of the document laid before that special Trade Union Congress.

"In conclusion, we may say that the mineworkers most earnestly desire a peaceful settlement of the present dispute. They realise fully the disastrous consequences, not only to themselves but to their fellow trade-unionists, of a stoppage of work in the mines at the present time. At the same time they are confident that their fellow-workers will not expect them to accept degrading conditions of employment, or to assent to the retrograde step of reverting to the eight-hour day.

It is possible that the lock-out notices may be postponed; they may even be withdrawn indefinitely. If so, so much the better. We feel bound to say, however, that the mineowners are perhaps the most obstinate set of employers in this country, and present indications seem to point to their having made up their minds to force the lock-out irrespective of the consequences.

We hope our worst fears may not be realised, but we must make our calculations, and we must ask our fellow-trade-unionists to make theirs on the basis of a million and a quarter mineworkers being locked out in ten days' time.

It is not for the Miners' Federation to lay down what action it considers Congress should take. As one of the constituent bodies of the Trades Union Congress, it considers it sufficient to set the facts before the Congress and to indicate the probability of the miners requiring its early and substantial help. It feels assured that such assistance will be readily forthcoming, and on this occasion, if a lock-out matures, it will not be left to a section to fight alone, but the struggle will be taken up, and the issue joined, by the whole Trade Union movement."

Meantime on 23rd July, the Miners' Executive had met the Special Committee of the General Council, already mentioned in the statement of July 11th. This Special Committee had straightway communicated with the Prime Minister and had taken various other preliminary steps. The Report of the General Council to the Scarborough Congress a few weeks later contains the following passage :—

" The Committee, after considering the various forms of active support which could best be applied felt that in the first stages at least, the fight should be limited to the production and distribution of coal. Arrangements were accordingly made to meet the Executives of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, National Union of Railwaymen, Railway Clerks' Association, Transport and General Workers' Union, and the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, at the Caxton Hall on Saturday, the 25th July, at 10.30 a.m.

At this Meeting the Unions were asked as a minimum requirement to refuse to handle coal, the movement of which was considered to be detrimental to the interests of the miners. The very cordial support and the united desire to assist was manifested by the Unions, and a Sub-Committee was set up to work out the details of the practical application of the decision. The Sub-Committee on Wednesday morning, 29th July, 1925, had arrived at a concerted policy."

This was the famous decision to place an embargo on movements of coal.

While these plans were being made for the backing up of the Miners, deputations were going to the Prime Minister, both from the General Council and from the Miners' Federation. On the 29th July the Prime Minister said to the Miners :

" that the Government would not grant any subsidy to the Industry, and that it must stand on its own economic foundations."

This was on the morning of Wednesday, 29th July. In the evening and on the following day, Thursday, 30th July, further meetings took place. On the morning of Thursday, July 30th—so the *Daily Herald* reported next day—there occurred an extremely significant passage in the conversations proceeding between the Prime Minister and the representatives of the miners. The Prime Minister had urged the miners to make a contribution towards " meeting the difficult situation with which the industry is confronted." This conversation ensued :—

D.5.

Miners :—" But what you propose means a reduction of wages."

Prime Minister :—" Yes. All the workers in this country have got to face a reduction of wages."

Miners :—" What do you mean ? "

Prime Minister :—" I mean all the workers of this country have got to take reductions in wages to help put industry on its feet."

The dead-lock still continued. Accordingly on Thursday morning, 30th July, the Special Committee, having met the Transport Unions, ratified the decision taken by the Sub-Committee referred to above. The embargo was now to be put in force. The actual form of the instructions issued to all members of Railway and Transport Unions began as follows :—

" Wagons containing coal must not be attached to any train after midnight on Friday, July 31st. . . . . " This was signed by George Hicks, as Chairman of the Transport Sub-Committee of the General Council ; by the Secretaries and Presidents of the unions involved (including J. H. Thomas and Henry Gosling, each of the Privy Council), and counter-signed by Executive Members of the Unions and by the Special Industrial Committee of the General Council.

A Special Conference of Trade Union Executives

had been summoned for the Thursday. This Conference begun at 3 p.m. and "unanimous and enthusiastic approval," to quote the words of the Report, was accorded the General Council in support of the miners. The effect on the Government was immediate. The same day the Prime Minister sent a communication, the final result of which was, that in the early hours of Friday morning, 31st July, 1925, the Ministry of Labour issued the following statement :—

D.6.

July 31*st*, 1925.

"Following on a meeting of the Cabinet, at which full consideration was given to the whole of the circumstances surrounding the threatened dispute, the Prime Minister had further conversations with the representatives of the miners and the owners.

The miners' representatives explained to the Prime Minister that it was their desire to co-operate in the inquiry proposed by the Prime Minister with a view to a full investigation into the methods of improving the productive efficiency of the industry for the purpose of increasing its competitive power in world markets.

They intimated that they felt it was not fair to require a reduction of wages with the present cost of living before an attempt had been made by means of an inquiry to secure a contribution towards meeting the difficult situation with which the industry was confronted.

The Prime Minister announced that in the circumstances the Government were prepared to render assistance to the industry until the spring, by which time the inquiry would be completed.

The Prime Minister requested the coalowners to suspend their notices for a fortnight in order that the necessary discussions could proceed as to the way in which the temporary assistance could be afforded."

Again on the 31st at 3.45 in the afternoon the Prime Minister met the Miners' Executive and the

Special Committee of the Trade Union Congress jointly, and explained that the owners had agreed to suspend notices, that the inquiry would take place, the Government in the meantime to guarantee financial assistance until the 1st May. Accordingly at 4 p.m. on the last day of July, the following wire was sent to General Secretaries of District Organisations in the Coal Industry :—

" Notices suspended. Work as usual.—Cook, Secy."

At the last moment, the Government, which up to then had in reality been supporting the coal owners, gave way, and yielded to the threat of an embargo on movements of coal.

On the same day, Friday, 31st July, a letter was sent to the Secretaries of all affiliated Unions and Trades Councils; of this letter the final four paragraphs ran as follows :—

D.7.

" The Miners' Federation have conveyed their most sincere thanks to the General Council, the Special Committee, and to the whole of the members of the Trade Union movement, for their ready and complete promises of support.

" The enforcement of the reductions which the owners have tried to effect in the existing agreement would have meant a loss in the wages of miners of many hundreds of thousands of pounds. The loyal co-operation of the railway and transport unions has been an immense stimulus to every trade unionist.

" The manifestation of solidarity which has been exhibited by all sections of the Trade Union movement is a striking portent for the future and marks an epoch in the history of the Movement.

" The notices are suspended for a fortnight and, while there is little doubt that the conflict has been avoided, the Trade Union movement must be alert and vigilant

in case the necessity should again arise for it to act in defence of its standards.

" Yours sincerely,

" A. B. SWALES, Chairman.

" W. M. CITRINE, Assistant Secy."

The Report of the General Council submitted to the fifty-seventh Trade Union Congress at the beginning of September ended its review of this mining crisis with the following significant statement :—

D.8.

" The settlement was regarded by the capitalist Press as a humiliating defeat of the Government by the organised workers.

" The Special Committee, while gratified at the splendid response of the Trade Union Movement to the call for assistance, could not escape the feeling that a further attempt might be made to enforce wages reductions or a lengthening in hours. It felt that its task had not been completed, and with the consent of the General Council proposed to remain in being, and to apply itself to the task of devising ways and means of consolidating the resistance of the Trade Union Movement should the attack be renewed."

It will be seen that at the actual moment of the crisis, and for the week or two immediately following, there had neither been hesitation nor doubt on the part of the representatives of labour. There had been clear insight, a clear call to action, and a clear response.

In the course of the months that followed, there gradually grows up an atmosphere which obscured the facts and had an enervating effect on the general will of the General Council. This is related in the chapters that follow.

DOCUMENTS

D.9.

July 24th, 1925.

Statement submitted to Special Trades Union Congress at Central Hall, Westminster, S.W.

The Joint Investigation into the Economic Position of the Mining Industry.

FELLOW TRADE UNIONISTS,

The Inquiry conducted by the representatives of the mine-owners and ourselves into the economic position of the mining industry was abruptly concluded by the mineowners as a consequence of our refusal to agree with them upon the necessary remedial measures for lifting the industry out of its present deplorable position.

Our own views as to the causes of the present position of the industry have been set forth in a separate document, entitled, "The Economic Position of the Coal Industry," which contains a clear summary of the economic position, and copies of which are available to the Trade Union Movement.

It may be said at once that a world coal crisis exists, and the position of the mineworkers in other coal-producing countries is almost entirely similar to our own. The following facts are, however, fundamental, and should be clearly borne in mind when considering the solution suggested by the mine-owners :—

(1) The output per person employed in Great Britain is greater than any other coal-producing country, excepting America.

(2) In America where the geological position and superior technique allow of a greater output per person employed, and consequently of a very much lower cost of production, a similar situation exists to that obtaining in this country; unemployment is rife, and there is a large under-consumption of coal.

(3) The hours of labour underground in this country are, in reality, only about 20 mins. per day less than the general eight-hour bank to bank day of European and American miners.

Note.—This is explained by the fact that the seven hours' day operating in this country is exclusive of winding times ; but the eight hours' day of other countries includes winding times.

(4) Immense stocks of coal exist in all countries and all have equal difficulty in disposing of them. This is peculiarly true of Germany, our supposedly principal competitor.

(5) Real wages are higher in all other countries than in the exporting districts of this country.

The situation with which we are confronted is thus one of a world shrinkage in the consumption of coal, and this is due to a variety of causes, the chief of which are :—

(*a*) The extensive use of black coal substitutes, particularly brown coal or lignite.

(*b*) The increasing growth of other sources of power, such as oil and hydro-electricity.

(*c*) The increase and improvement of scientific processes for the general conservation of black coal.

(*d*) The failure of capitalist production to scientifically organise and develop on new lines, and in a way which would counteract the new developments and take advantage of the processes which science is constantly developing for the use of coal.

(*e*) The unsatisfactory political international relationships which are preventing the full operation of all coal consuming industries.

The situation in this country has been further aggravated by the interference with our normal markets by German Reparation coals, the loss of the Russian market, and the premature return to the gold standard.

It will be clear from this that the mineowners' solution for this crisis, namely, the cutting of wages and the lengthening of hours, is no solution at all, and must simply lead to a repetition of the same process a few months later. The enormous sacrifices which the mineworkers are asked to make would thus be in vain.

THE OWNERS' WAGE PROPOSALS.

The proposals which have been submitted by the mineowners have already been condemned by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, who have endorsed our refusal to negotiate those terms. The terms have been widely commented upon, but we think we should re-state in some detail for the benefit of the Trade Union Movement their precise meaning and implication.

The present Wages Agreement provides for a general National Minimum Wage of 33⅓ per cent. upon standard wages, with a further proviso that the wage of no able-bodied adult day wage workman shall fall below a figure of 40 per cent. upon the standard rates of the lowest paid classes of labour in the various districts. It is now proposed that minimum wages should be abolished. The principle of a national minimum percentage would thus be lost, and there would be no limit to the extent to which the wages of the general body of mineworkers could be reduced.

The position of profits under the present Agreement is, that if in any period of ascertainment the proceeds, after meeting all other costs of production, are insufficient to provide minimum wages, such deficiency must be made good by the mineowners, who may recoup themselves in subsequent periods, providing the surplus proceeds are sufficient for that purpose. Under the present proposals, inasmuch as the provision of minimum wages is to be abolished, the mineowners would not have to make up wages in any way, but, on the contrary, would secure in the aggregate a guaranteed profit of £13 out of every £100 of the proceeds after the full costs of production other than wages had been met. In short, it is proposed that a definite portion of the proceeds should be allotted to profits in each ascertainment period, irrespective of the amount of the proceeds and irrespective of the position of wages. Wages would thus no longer be a first charge on the industry, but would rank equally with profits, each taking a definite share of the proceeds whatever they may be.

In regard to the lowest paid classes of workmen, the present Agreement provides for a subsistence allowance being paid to these, which, in the normal way, is met by the mineowners and the higher paid workmen in the respective proportions in which they share the proceeds. The mineowners now propose that subsistence allowances, if any, should be paid entirely by the workmen who are in receipt of wages above those of the lowest paid class in each district.

These proposals, if put into operation would, in effect, transfer all the economic ills of the industry to the already overburdened shoulders of the mineworkers, and the mineowners would assure to themselves a good profit under all conceivable circumstances. There would be very little incentive to efficiency on their part, and they would be able to automatically rid themselves of all their troubles by progressive reductions in wages. Experience teaches us that the awful state to which the mineworkers would be eventually reduced, if these proposals were operated, is too terrible to contemplate. It must be borne in mind that the mineowners have consistently refused to allow us to have any share of the control of the industry, yet we are asked to allow our wages to be entirely at their mercy, and the burden of bad management, inefficient methods of production, administration, and distribution, could all be automatically transferred to our shoulders without any let or hindrance whatsoever.

It is impossible to seriously consider such a position.

We attach to this report a series of statistical tables which show the extent of the reductions in wages in August if the proposals were put into operation. The accuracy of these figures cannot be questioned, and they may be accepted by the Trade Union Movement with entire confidence. It should, however, be clearly realised that these figures only show the immediate effect of the proposals. The position which would eventually be reached is not one which we care to seriously contemplate.

THE COURT OF INQUIRY.

In view of the strength of our case, and the character of the proposals which have been made to us, it is natural that our fellow trade unionists should ask us why we refuse to take part in the present Government Inquiry.

The reasons for this refusal are many and varied, and, though the decision of our Conference on this point was unanimous, it was made only after the most careful thought and discussion.

The terms of reference of the Court are limited. At best it can make only a partial inquiry. The object of the Court is obviously to issue its report before the 31st of July. With all respect to the persons who constitute the Court, we venture to suggest that, in view of the magnitude and complexity of the subject, it is impossible for it to adequately consider in the time available all those wider aspects of the case which we would desire to bring forward. In our view, therefore, it is inevitable that its consideration of the subject would, in the main, be limited to the questions of hours and wages, and, indeed, the terms of reference of the Court entirely justify that view. Further, these questions would be considered mainly in the light of the figures supplied in respect of the financial position of the collieries. In other words, the Court would judge of the capacity of the industry from the narrow standpoint of the financial position of the industry as indicated by the returns made in respect of the pit-head sale of raw coal, and it would be impossible to give proper consideration to all those wider aspects of the subject which are essential to a proper judgment upon our case.

If our view as to the scope of this Inquiry is a correct one, then we may at once point out that a partial inquiry of this character was held only a little over twelve months ago, and we feel we are justified in quoting the findings of that Court as being reasons which entirely obviate the necessity of another inquiry of the same character.

The Court found :—

> That the wages paid to the day wage workers in the coal-mining industry were substantially less than the equivalent of their pre-war earnings, and this was also true of pieceworkers in certain collieries, but not in all.
>
> That the provision of a minimum wage should have precedence over the distribution of profits.

The position of wages has not materially changed since the above findings were issued. The proposals of the coalowners would, however, at once reduce wages to a point where the average increase over pre-war earnings would be approximately only 37 per cent., and would abolish the payment of a minimum wage in respect of which principle a Court of Inquiry has already reported in the terms stated above.

In regard to a fuller inquiry, such as that held in 1919, that

would be a very different matter. We feel, however, that we are quite justified in referring to our bitter experience following that inquiry, when, after we had proved our case the Government refused to give legislative effect to the majority findings of the Commission, as, in itself, sufficient justification for our refusal to participate in the present inquiry.

In view of all these circumstances, we feel confident that our fellow trade unionists will endorse our action in this matter.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, we may say that the mineworkers most earnestly desire a peaceful settlement of the present dispute. They realise fully the disastrous consequences, not only to themselves but to their fellow trade unionists, of a stoppage of work in the mines at the present time. At the same time they are confident that their fellow-workers will not expect them to accept degrading conditions of employment, or to assent to the retrograde step of reverting to the eight-hour day.

It is possible that the lock-out notices may be postponed ; they may even be withdrawn indefinitely. If so, so much the better. We feel bound to say, however, that the mineowners are perhaps the most obstinate set of employers in this country, and present indications seem to point to their having made up their mind to force the lock-out irrespective of the consequences.

We hope our worst fears may not be realised, but we must make our calculations, and we must ask our fellow trade unionists to make theirs on the basis of a million and a quarter mineworkers being locked out in ten days' time.

It is not for the Miners' Federation to lay down what action it considers Congress should take. As one of the constituent bodies of the Trades Union Congress, it considers it sufficient to set the facts before the Congress and to indicate the probability of the miners requiring its early and substantial help. It feels assured that such assistance will be readily forthcoming, and on this occasion, if a lock-out matures, it will not be left to a section to fight alone, but the struggle will be taken up, and the issue joined, by the whole Trade Union Movement.

Yours fraternally,

On behalf of the Executive Committee
the Miners' Federation of Great Britain,

HERBERT SMITH, *President.*
THOMAS RICHARDS, *Vice-President.*
W. P. RICHARDSON, *Treasurer.*
A. J. COOK, *Secretary.*

July 22nd, 1925.

D.10.

Times Editorial (July 29th, 1926).

A DECISIVE REPORT.

The Report of the Court of Inquiry into the Mining dispute was issued last night, and will be found on another page. It is unanimous and bound to have a decisive effect—first, upon the immediate crisis, and secondarily upon the further steps to be taken for dealing with the large problem of the coal industry. In view of the findings of the Court, it will be impossible for the mineowners to maintain the ground upon which they have hitherto taken their stand. They will have no alternative but to suspend the notices and to withdraw their present proposals; and if they are wise they will do so with goodwill. All fair-minded persons will give credit to them if they frankly accept the verdict and act upon it. The Report itself attaches no responsibility to the owners or to the miners for the common calamity whose consequences each side has not unnaturally sought to transfer to the other. The crisis, it finds, is to a large extent the creation of neither party, but has arisen in the main from causes not within their control. We all recognise that. It is due, primarily and principally, to the general economic dislocation caused by the war, and also in some measure to the double competition of foreign with British coal and of other fuels with all coal. The mineowners, urged by the miners to formulate proposals for relieving the distressed state of the industry, worked out the measures which seem to them best calculated to achieve that result; but these have been rejected by an impartial and competent tribunal after a searching examination. The result will appear all the more decisive because the owners had the field to themselves; they had every opportunity of explaining and defending their proposals, which were not attacked by hostile witnesses or advocates, because no rebutting case was offered. We say it will so appear because, as a matter of fact, it is open to doubt whether the leaders of the Miners' Federation would have put up so good a cross-examination as the Court itself, which was "perhaps more severe" owing to their absence. But in any case, the owners' proposals failed to carry conviction on their merits, and, though it is open to anyone to maintain that they are really sound, the public at large will certainly accept the reasoned judgment of the Court. Action upon it must follow, which means that the notices will be suspended for the present and the pits will not be idle on Saturday. Any other course has been made impossible.

D.11.

LOCK-OUT OF COAL MINERS, Aug. 1, 1925.

Official Stoppage of the Movement of Coal.

Official Instructions to all Railway and Transport Workers, as

agreed unanimously by a Joint Conference of the National Union of Railwaymen, Associated Soci ty of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, Railway Clerks' Association, and the Transport and General Workers' Union Executives, and approved by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress.

Railways.

1. Wagons containing coal must not be attached to any train after midnight on Friday, July 31st, and after this time wagons of coal must not be supplied to any industrial or commercial concerns, or be put on the tip roads at docks for the coaling of ships.
2. All coal en route at midnight on Friday to be worked forward to the next siding suitable for storing it.
3. Any coal, either in wagons or stock at a depot, may be utilised at that depot for the purpose of coaling engines for passenger and goods trains, but must not be moved from that depot to another.

Docks, Wharves, &c.

Coal Exports.—All Tippers and Trimmers will cease work at the end of the second shift on July 31st.

Coal Imports.—On no account may import coal be handled from July 31st.

General.—A general stoppage of men handling coal on other classes of tonnage on Friday midnight.

Waterways and Locks.

All men on canals, waterways, etc., engaged in carrying coal will cease Friday midnight, with the exception of men who have coal en route, who will be allowed to take it to destination and tie up. *Safety Men for pumping, etc., will be permitted to work for safety purposes only.*

Road Transport.

All men engaged in delivering coal to commercial and industrial concerns will cease Friday night, July 31st. Men delivering for domestic purposes will cease at 12 noon, Saturday, August 1st.

Local Committees.

For the purpose of carrying out these instructions the members of the organisation herein concerned shall, from each district, establish small sub-committees so as to co-ordinate policy in giving effect to same.

George Hicks (Chairman, Transport Sub-Committee).

Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen—

B. H. Jenkins. D. S. Humphreys (President).
O. W. Skinner John Bromley (General Secretary)

National Union of Railwaymen—

F. FOWLER.
ARTHUR LAW.
W. DOBBIE (President).
J. H. THOMAS (General Secretary).
C. T. CRAMP (Industrial Gen. Secy.).
J. MARCHBANK (Assistant Secretary).

Railway Clerks' Association—

GEORGE LATHAN.
T. GILL (President).
A. G. WALKDEN (General Secretary).

Transport and General Workers' Union—

HARRY GOSLING.
ERNEST BEVIN.

General Council Special Committee—

A. B. SWALES (Chairman).
J. BROMLEY.
A. HAYDAY.
G. HICKS.
J. MARCHBANK.
E. L. POULTON.
B. TILLETT.
A. G. WALKDEN.
W. M. CITRINE (Assistant Secretary).

Chapter IV

PREPAREDNESS—SCENE ONE

In its report, written at the beginning of August, 1925, the Trades Union Congress General Council had used the significant sentence—"The Settlement was regarded by the Capitalist Press as an humiliating defeat of the Government by the organised workers."

It is perhaps difficult to convey to anyone not in this country at the time, difficult even to bring back to the recollection of those who were reading the daily press, the concentrated fury with which the newspapers greeted the Government announcement. The situation in both the greater capitalist newspapers and in the smaller sheets was analysed again and again as the writers were best able to do it. Gradually in the course of the discussion which raged in the papers, the controversy began to be narrowed down to the issue of whether Mr. Baldwin and his Government had been pusillanimous or whether they had merely been prudent. But an unmistakable warning was given to Mr. Baldwin and the Cabinet that if a second occasion came, discretion would not be held the better part of valour.

It need not be imagined that Mr. Baldwin had done something against the interests of the small handful of bank magnates who govern Britain. On the contrary, he was clearly expressing the policy of finance-capital, the "temporary assistance" policy. Nor, on the other hand, were the newspapers the voice of that imaginary quantity "Public Opinion." "Public Opinion" is itself a manufactured article, and the

patents for the process of manufacture are possessed by the millionaires of Fleet Street.

But the effect of the discussion was not anything other than had been intended when the discussion began. Its effect was to alarm, warn, prepare and equip the bourgeoisie for a future struggle.

So it was that the discussion came to be narrowed down to questions of how far in face of a similar situation the Government could rely on being technically equipped to meet and cope with it. "Was nine months enough?" some said. Others seemed to think a less space of time would be enough in order to be prepared. What was quite obvious to everyone was that the newspapers, and behind them every circle of capitalist society, were carrying out an intensive campaign of PREPAREDNESS.

Preparedness for what? The answer to that question was to be given presently.

The first step was the public announcement in the newspapers (September 25th, 1926) that there had been already set up an organisation called the "Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies"—afterwards notorious under the initials O.M.S. The announcement ran as follows:—

D.12.

"For many months past it has been evident that a movement is being organised to take advantage of a trade dispute, exceptionally difficult to solve, in order to promote a general strike, and by suspending supplies and arresting power, transport, and sanitary services to paralyse the national life. Such a danger was imminent on August 6 last, and it would have found the large majority of the people, who have neither sympathy with the movement, nor direct interest in the issue, wholly unprepared. Numerous suggestions have since been made from various quarters for organising those citizens who would be prepared to

volunteer to maintain supplies and vital services in the event of a general strike.

It seems, therefore, that the moment has come to announce publicly that such an organisation has already been constituted and is at work in many metropolitan boroughs, while steps are being taken to create corresponding organisations in all the principal centres of the Kingdom."

After giving the Council, the officers, etc., the circular proceeded :—

D12. (continued).

" The Organisation is strictly non-political and non-party in character, and the object it has in view is to register and classify those citizens of all classes and of either sex who are prepared to render voluntary assistance in maintaining the supply of food, water, and fuel and the efficiency of public services indispensable to the normal life of the community.

It has no aggressive or provocative aims. It is not formed with any idea of opposing the legitimate efforts of trade unions to better the status and conditions of employment of their members, and it is in complete sympathy with any constitutional action to bring about a more equitable adjustment of social and economic conditions. If, however, in order to secure a particular end, an attempt is made to inflict severe privation on the great mass of the people who have no direct part in the actual dispute, this Organisation of Citizens, serving the interests of the general community, will place its entire resources at the disposal of the constitutional authorities."

There followed further details with regard to the funds—(" Certain funds . . . have been placed by a few patriotic citizens at the disposal of the Council "), details as to local organisation, an enumeration of the five categories of volunteers wanted (the first category to be of military age).

This organisation was of a kind entirely new in

the annals of strike-breaking societies. It was not so much its careful phrasing, as the names and standing of its originators, that marked it off from all previous class-conscious efforts with similar objects. Its titular head was Lord Hardinge of Penshurst and on its Council were Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe, General Sir Francis Lloyd, etc., etc. Now it should be realised that these gentlemen were not of the type usually described as die-hards; the peers were not backwoodsmen or wild peers; the commoners had not suddenly emerged from the obscurer columns of the "Morning Post." They were, all of them, trusted servants of the bourgeoisie, carrying the highest reputation for faithful service in their respective professions. They were all of them half-pay; their participation did not involve the Government directly, and any one of them might conceivably have acted for once in his life in an irresponsible manner; but by all the canons of commonsense their participation *en bloc* did involve the Government indirectly.

Who were these gentlemen whose O.M.S. (significant initials—usually standing for "On Majesty's Service") marked the beginnings in Britain of *legal fascism*?

Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, after a long apprenticeship at the Foreign Office, in which after his Ambassadorship at Leningrad in the fateful years 1904-06, he rose to be Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, became Viceroy of India, in succession to Lord Minto, and remained in office from 1910 to 1916. After a further spell at the Foreign Office, he succeeded Lord Derby as British Ambassador in Paris in the years 1920-22.

Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe, beginning as a midshipman, rose steadily until he became Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet during the first part of the war. Thereafter he was First Sea Lord of the

Admiralty, then Chief of the Naval Staff. After the war he undertook an Empire Tour with the purpose of co-ordinating imperial strategy and resources, which tour was to culminate in the Defence Conference (*i.e.*, War Plans Conference) of the British Empire holden in London in October, 1923.

Lieut.-General Sir Francis Lloyd who, in the course of his military career, rose to be Commander of the First Guards Brigade, commanded the London District during the war and in 1919-20 was Food Commissioner for London and the Home Counties.

Sir Lynden Macassey was a barrister, who during the war acquired a special prominence by the work he did for the Ministry of Munitions and other Government Departments in settling strikes. He was a member of the Commission on Clyde Munition Workers' Grievances ; Chairman of the Government Commission for Dilution of Labour on the Clyde and, finally, after the war, he was appointed Labour Assessor for the British Government on the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague.

Dr. Walter Seton, known for many years as an expert on Balkan Affairs, had also a certain fame in some of the obscurer reaches of historical scholarship. In 1923, he was responsible for securing for Scotland the Penicuik Jewels of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Mr. Geoffrey Drage, connected with the Charity Organisation Society, was Secretary of the Royal Commission of Labour in 1891-1894, and his many subsequent works, including one on Trade Unions written in 1905, and one on Russia written in 1909, appear to have been his qualifications.

Typical of the remaining members of the Council, whose names were less well known to the public, was Colonel Sir Courtauld Thomson, attached to whose name in *Who's Who*, is the following rigmarole :—

Knight of Grace, Order of St. John of Jerusalem; *Education*, Eton, Magdalen College (Oxford); Member of the Inner Temple; attached General Headquarters Staff, B.E.F., Egypt, 1916; Italy, 1918; Chairman of Hospital of Order of St. John of Jerusalem; National Council for Mental Hygiene; King Edward VII. Sanatorium, Midhurst; Disablement Group Officers' Association and Irish Civil Service Committee; Trustee Cassel Hospital for Functional Nervous Disorders; Order of Nile, 2nd Class; Knight Commander of the Order of St. Sava, 1917; Order of St. Maurice of St. Lazarus; Italian Military Cross with Bar; Grand Officer Order of Danilo (Montenegro); Roumanian Cross of Regina Maria; Cross of Mercy (Serbia); Gold Medal, Italian and Serbian Red Cross; despatches five times. *Clubs*—Brooks's, Reform; New, Edinburgh.

Sir Rennell Rodd, a diplomatist who sat on the Council, and recently famous for not being the author of the "Whispering Gallery," said the Organisation had no association with the Fascisti.

It is of some interest to record the comments made upon the announcement of the O.M.S. The "Manchester Guardian" wrote an editorial which deplored the new step, and at the same time printed in its newscolumns an item with the heading :—

Communists and the New "O.M.S."

Developing the Class War.

reading as follows :—

D.13.

"The political bureau of the Communist Party of Great Britain have issued a statement on the formation of an organisation for the maintenance of supplies and services during any general strike announced in the press yesterday. The statement is in the following terms :—

The Communist Party regards the call to form the O.M.S. as the most definite step towards organised Fascism yet made in this country. It begins its career with a lie,

both in regard to the miners' dispute and its claim to represent the "Community." The miners have demanded a living wage, and have shown the way that this can be obtained. The employers and the Government refused to take that course and prepared to attack the wages and hours of the miners.

As an alternative, the support of the brother unions of the miners was the obvious effort of the unions to defend themselves as well as the miners, and not a subtle conspiracy.

Any large strike paralyses supplies, and consequently the organisation of O.M.S. can only be regarded as a strike-breaking association. According to its own observation, its claim to represent the 'Community' is nonsense. An examination of the leading personnel and its proclaimed purpose can only stamp it as the organisation for the defence of property against the lives of the masses of labouring people.

It is no chance coincidence that the announcement of the formation of the strike-breaking organisation should take place on the same day that Mr. Baldwin repudiates the terms and meaning of the coal settlement. This can and will be taken as a challenge by the working-class movement.

The Communist Party does not regard this development as unique. It simply indicates the inevitable lines in the development of capitalism already traversed in other countries, and confirms the Communist analysis of the class war. It will develop the class war here and convince the workers of the correctness of our policy and our demand for the organisation of workers' defence corps."

The "Daily Herald," on the other hand, in its editorial, reached the following conclusions :—

D.14.

"This may seem to be a blow at the Labour Movement. If it is meant for that, it has been badly misdirected. . . . The person whom the blow really affects is Mr. Baldwin. . . . Will the Prime Minister submit to this insulting intimation that he is unfit for his job ?"

On the next day, the "Daily Herald" quoted passages from the other newspapers purporting to show that with the exception of the "Daily Mail," the O.M.S. "had met with a very chilly reception."

However, if the newspaper press were cool, it was necessary to warm them up. That meant perhaps some premature disclosures; but in order to ensure the most thorough support for the O.M.S., it was a risk that had to be run. The Home Secretary accordingly issued the following statement in reply to an anonymous correspondent on the 1st October:—

D.15.

"Thank you for your letter of yesterday in reference to the organisation known as the O.M.S. I will be perfectly frank with you. I have known of the inauguration of this body for many weeks past; in fact, the promoters consulted me as to their desire to form some such organisation. I told them quite frankly that it was the duty of the Government to preserve order and to maintain the necessary supplies for keeping the life of the country going in an emergency. This duty the Government is prepared to carry out. My plans have been long since made, and have been approved by the Government as a whole.

On the other hand, we have not thought it necessary or desirable to make a public parade of our willingness and ability to do that which is our duty, nor have we desired to assume what might be considered a provocative attitude by enrolling several hundred thousand men who would be willing to assist in maintaining the services vital to the country's life. This being so, I told the promoters of the O.M.S. that there was no objection on the part of the Government to their desire to inaugurate the body to which you refer; that, if and when an emergency arose, the Government would discharge the responsibility which is theirs and theirs alone, but that it would be a very great assistance to us to receive from the O.M.S., or from any other body of well-disposed citizens, classified lists of men

in different parts of the country who would be willing to place their services at the disposal of the Government.

From this statement you will see that not only is there no reason why you should object to the O.M.S., but that you, or any other citizen who would desire the maintenance of peace, order, and good government in times of difficulty, would be performing a patriotic act by allying yourselves with this or any other similar body, formed for the sole purpose of helping the public authorities in the way I have suggested."

During these same weeks a series of parallel events were taking place. The Conference of the Labour Party was being held at Liverpool in the last week of September, to be followed a week later by the Brighton Conference of the Conservative Party. The main feature of the Liverpool Conference of the Labour Party was the expulsion of the Communists. This expulsion appeared to many to have been taken as a signal. Speaking at Brighton, the Prime Minister, on the 8th October, promised prosecution of the Communists. Two especially significant decisions were taken at this Conservative Conference. The first was a resolution calling on the Government to pass laws to cripple the Trade Unions. This was a direct attack. An equally direct attack on the working class (because it meant an attack on a fighting policy) was the demand made for the prosecution of Communist Party members, who had exposed themselves to the wrath of the Conservative Associations by their advocacy of Counter-preparedness on the part of the working classes against the plans being laid by Lord Hardinge and (it was suspected) by the Government officials. Within the shortest possible time after the conclusion of these two Conferences twelve of the leaders of the Communist Party were arrested and placed upon trial. When their trial reached what now

appears a foregone conclusion, the following resolution was passed by the Executive of the Miners' Federation, November 27th, 1925 :—

D.16.

" This Committee unanimously protests against the altogether unwarranted and severe sentence inflicted upon the officials of the Communist Party, considering that the whole proceedings were influenced at every stage by political bias.

We unite with the other Trade Unions in demanding their immediate release and the prevention of this attempt to interfere with the freedom of the press, free speech and personal liberty of opinion."

Two further events occurred in the later autumn. In the first place, a circular was sent out by the Ministry of Health in which it was suggested to local authorities that they should make preparations in case there might be a state of emergency, while at the same time they were politely informed that they should not meddle with food supplies or national transport. This circular set out the whole of the plans for the administering of the Emergency Powers Act. It set forth the whole apparatus of Civil Commissioners, the division of the country into ten divisions, its further sub-division into areas in each of which there would be a local Food Officer, a local Road Officer, a Haulage Committee, and a Coal Emergency Officer.

" There will also," said the circular, " be a Chairman selected by the Government to convene and preside over a Volunteer Service Committee in each area for the recruitment of volunteers to assist in maintaining essential national services."

The local authorities were asked to help this Chairman, but the initiative was to come from him. The whole circular is set forth in the Appendix to this chapter.

It will be seen that this circular, taken in conjunction with the previous Ministry of Health circular of 1922 (and before that the plans and schemes set afoot in 1919, as revealed by Mr. Lloyd George in his Mansion House speech after the Railway Strike of September-October, 1919), was really concerned to build up an extra-constitutional body in each locality, something which, however much it might be consonant with recent acts of Parliament, was designed to supersede or subordinate the whole traditional structure of local government in Great Britain. The local governing bodies either generally or in particular places, may have a different political complexion from that of the national Government. They might even, in places, have a Labour majority. The object of these elaborate preparations was clearly to provide a machinery which the Government could regard as politically reliable. The Mayor of an English borough, the Provost of a Scottish burgh, is not, never has been, an official of the national Government. The new array of officials to be set up would take their orders from Whitehall.

Again, this circular was another occasion where previously secret preparations were brought into the open and made as public as possible. On the 19th November, 1925, after Mr. Taylor, M.P., in the House of Commons, had asked the Home Secretary " if he is aware that Town Clerks are receiving letters marked 'secret,' stating that it has been decided that the organisation for maintaining essential services during a national emergency should be set up by H.M. Government, and that Town Clerks are being interviewed, etc., etc.," Sir William Joynson-Hicks, in the course of his supplementary replies to this and other questions, said :—

D.17.

"This Government, as did others, recognise that it is their duty to take steps to ensure the necessary supplies for maintaining essential services in an emergency, and they have prepared plans for carrying out this duty. If, however, any unofficial organisation is in a position to prepare classified lists of persons willing to render help in an emergency, and if such organisation is prepared to place such lists at the disposal of the public authorities when required, the Government welcome such assistance."

Needless to say, it was only a small portion of these preparations that were made public; but that preparations were going on, and on the most extensive scale, was something of which no one had any doubt.

Whatever doubts there might have been as to the intentions of the Government were swept away by Mr. Winston Churchill's speech on December 10th, 1925. Speaking on the Coal Mining Industry Subvention, the Chancellor of the Exchequer made the following statement (italics ours) :—

D.18.

"The Government thought, moreover, at that juncture, the end of July, that they saw possibilities of actual trade revival. We did not feel justified in predicting it, but we believed from the evidence submitted to us from many quarters that there were good probabilities of an improvement, of a diminution in unemployment, of an improvement in world prices in relation to our own, and, in consequence, an appreciable bridging of the gap between the ascertained wage and the minimum wage. *We were also impressed with the fact that the country as a whole was not sufficiently informed about the character and immense consequences of such a struggle as that with which it was confronted.*

It is quite clear that a conflict of this kind, launched in this way, might easily cease to be a mere ordinary industrial dispute about wages and conditions and might assume a character altogether different from such industrial disputes. If that were to ensue, then it is quite clear

that such a conflict between the community on the one hand, with the Government at its head, and many of the great trade unions on the other, could only end in one way, namely, by the community, at whatever cost, emerging victorious over an organised section of its citizens, however valuable, important, and even numerous that section was.

We considered, therefore, that should such a struggle be found to be inevitable at the very last moment, it was of supreme importance that it should only be undertaken under conditions which would not expose the nation needlessly or wantonly to perils, the gravity of which cannot possibly be over-estimated. We, therefore, decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, *or, if not of averting it, of coping effectually with it when the time came."*

It would be difficult to imagine a speech more truculently phrased or conveying a clearer warning of the Government's intentions.

Thus the position stood at Christmas. Half of the subsidy period had passed, and the Government were confidently facing the possibilities of an industrial conflict ; their preparations were already well advanced.

DOCUMENTS

D.19.

CIRCULAR 636—MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

(Nov. 20, 1925).

I am directed by the Minister of Health to refer to the circular letter which was sent to local authorities in May, 1922, in which it was stated that it would be for local authorities to make such arrangements for the maintenance of local services as might be thought to be required in the event of need arising.

The events of recent years have shown that an industrial dispute may be so extended as to interfere seriously with communications, the conveyance of food and of other necessities, the supply of light and power, and the health and means of livelihood of the population at large. While it is desirable that Government authorities, whether central or local, should keep aloof from any industrial dispute, so far as it affects only the employers and the employed in the industry concerned, it is essential that other members of the community should be protected from the dangers and inconveniences of such a situation as is here indicated. This protection can best

be supplied by decentralised organisation designed to secure the maintenance of services essential to the well-being of the community.

Should such an emergency occur, it is to their local authorities that the people will naturally turn for help in the difficulties which they have to meet, and in order that any action initiated locally may harmonise with the national measures which the Government consider it desirable to take, they think it necessary now to communicate to local authorities the following outline of the organisation which would be brought into operation by the Government to deal with essential services which are not purely local in character. This outline will, if it be necessary, be supplemented by further details in a later communication. By "emergency" is meant a state of affairs necessitating the issue of a proclamation under the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, as a preliminary to the issue of regulations "for securing the essentials of life of the country."

The organisation which the Government propose is designed to supplement and assist in an emergency the normal methods of communication, supply, and distribution, and to give to all those who can help an opportunity of doing so in the manner most required. It is not intended that the Government should substitute new machinery for that ordinarily existing to meet the essential needs of the community.

1. A Minister will, in such an emergency, act as Civil Commissioner on behalf of the Government in each of ten divisions covering the whole of England and Wales. He will be assisted by a staff, consisting mainly of representatives of the Departments of Government concerned and dealing with the following subjects—Transport, food, postal services, coal. It will be the duty of the civil commissioner and his staff during the emergency to keep in touch with the local authorities in each division and to be available for consultation by them; and he will be empowered, if necessary, to give decisions on behalf of the Government.

The towns in which Civil Commissioners will be stationed, and the outlines of the areas of the divisions for which they will act, are set out in an appendix.

The Officers who will act as the chief assistants to the Civil Commissioners, and those who will act as technical representatives for the services mentioned, have been appointed, and these officers will, as requisite, put themselves in touch with representatives of local authorities and provide them with such information as may be practicable in regard to the details of the organisation.

2. Each division is divided into suitable areas for administering essential national services, and, if considered necessary, for recruiting volunteers for those purposes. In each area there will, on an emergency, be a local food officer, a local road officer, and a haulage committee and a coal emergency officer, besides representatives (where required) for other essential services. There will also be a Chairman selected by the Government to convene and preside over a volunteer Service Committee in each area for the

recruitment of volunteers to assist in maintaining essential national services.

In any town in which the Chairman of the Committee might consider it necessary to open a recruiting centre, it is earnestly hoped that it would be found practicable for the local authority concerned to combine with him in making the centre available for recruiting both for national and for local purposes, allocating by arrangement volunteers to local and national services in accordance with their qualifications and the needs of the occasion. Local authorities are not expected to take any action so far as national services are concerned unless and until approached by the Chairman.

3. On an emergency arising, reliance will be placed to the utmost extent upon normal channels for the supply and distribution of food, and to this end the divisional food representative upon the Civil Commissioners' Staff will arrange for consultation with the principal traders as to the stocks of essential foodstuffs in their possession or in transit. In the event of any shortage or delay in the supply of essential foodstuffs to the division, the food representative will be in possession of information as to alternative sources of supply and the means to make them available. Local distribution and local shortages not affecting national supplies will ordinarily be dealt with by the local Food Officer.

4. Road transport will be dealt with on similar lines. The road commissioner upon the Civil Commissioner's staff will be assisted by road officers and haulage committees in each of the areas comprised in the division, who will endeavour by voluntary arrangement to promote the economical use of existing vehicles and where necessary the diversion of vehicles from less to more important services. Road commissioners and road officers will be furnished with powers to this end should the exercise of such powers prove necessary.

5. In an emergency full directions will be sent as to the supply and distribution of coal. These directions may, if necessary, limit the supply of coal obtainable for any household or business, and may also place upon local authorities responsibilities for regulating the consumption of gas and electricity within their districts. They would probably necessitate in most cases the allocation of a particular officer or officers by the local authority during the period that they were in force. The local authority will have the assistance of a coal emergency officer and of a committee of traders within their own district.

6. The maintenance of law and order and the protection of persons and property from violence may be one of the most important services. The organisation of the necessary arrangements and the control of the Police and the Special Constabulary rest with the Police Authorities and the Chief Constables, but the local authorities might co-operate, for instance, in securing able-bodied citizens of good character to serve as Special Constables. The arrangements for the enrolment of Special Constables will be made by the police, and any men who come forward as Special Constables, or who offer their services in a general capacity and appear most suited for

service as Special Constables, should be referred to the Police Station or other place of enrolment appointed for the purpose.

7. While it is impossible to draw any hard and fast line of demarcation between national and local services which is universally applicable, the position may be broadly defined as follows :—

Local authorities are expected to undertake responsibility for the maintenance of local public utility services ; in addition, they are asked to co-operate with the national organisation in regard to local transport and the local distribution of coal. In the absence of further directions they are not expected to undertake responsibility for the local distribution of food, nor are they asked to accept responsibility for shipping, railway or coastal communications, or docks and harbours except where the local authority are also the port authority.

8. It will be realised that in an emergency the burden upon national resources must in any event be considerable, and responsibility could not be excepted by the Government for expenditure incurred by local authorities in meeting local needs. Where, however, a joint recruiting station is established the expenditure incurred would have to be allocated between the Government and the local authority concerned. Precise instructions on this point would be issued to chairman of volunteer service committees.

(Signed) W. A. ROBINSON.

The following appendix is added to the letter :—

Divisional Headquarters.	*Area of division.*
LONDON,	London, Middlesex, Herts, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey.
READING,	Berks, Oxfordshire, Bucks, Hants, Isle of Wight, Wilts.
BRISTOL,	Gloucestershire, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, Cornwall.
CARDIFF,	Glamorgan, Carmarthen, Pembroke, Cardigan, Radnor, Brecon, Monmouthshire.
LIVERPOOL,	Lancashire, Cheshire, Denbighshire, Montgomeryshire, Merioneth, Carnarvonshire, Anglesey, Flintshire, Cumberland, Westmorland.
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,	Northumberland, Durham.
LEEDS,	Yorkshire.
NOTTINGHAM,	Notts, Lincolnshire, Rutland, Leicestershire, Northants, Derbyshire.
BIRMINGHAM,	Warwickshire, Worcester, Herefordshire, Salop, Staffordshire.
CAMBRIDGE,	Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Hants, Norfolk, Suffolk.

Chapter V

PREPAREDNESS—SCENE TWO

The definite and concrete preparations made by the Government had been heralded and accompanied by what may be called demonstrations in the form of speeches by Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Churchill, etc., as well as the whole chorus of Fleet Street. On the Trade Union side, when we turn to examine what degree of preparedness there was, we find, at any rate, a smaller, though less shrill, series of demonstrations. Of these, most important was the Conference of the Trades Union Congress, held at Scarborough. At this Congress, the President, Mr. A. B. Swales, delivered an address, of which the keynote was high-pitched and confident. It was the sound of victory.

The note struck in this Presidential address was sounded again in a series of resolutions dealing with Workshop Committees, International Trade Union Unity, Increase of power to the General Council, Imperialism, the Dawes Scheme and China.

The Congress in a resolution on Trade Union aims, unequivocally declared that the " Trade Union Movement must organise to prepare the Trade Unions in conjunction with the Party and the Workers to struggle for the overthrow of capitalism," and added a pledge to develop Workshop Committees.

The discussion of International Trade Union Unity was preceded by a speech of Mr. Fred Bramley—his swan-song—which expressed the feeling of international solidarity in a most telling manner. Thereafter a resolution was passed which enabled the incoming General Council to achieve world-unity if they would.

The Congress defined Imperialism, emphasised its opposition thereto and declared in favour of an alliance with Colonial workers and insisted in the right of self-determination to the point of separation from the Empire.

The question of China was taken up in further detail; the use of British armed forces as strike-breakers condemned, and the General Council instructed to get in touch with the Kuo-min-tang (trade unionist section), etc.

The Dawes plan was out and out condemned (in spite of the fact that it had been put through by the Government of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald) by a strongly-worded resolution.

Finally, on the question of increase of forces to the General Council, a resolution was carried placing the responsibility on the General Council itself to examine and submit recommendations to a Special Conference.

This Chairman's speech, these resolutions and the whole tone of the meetings made the Scarborough Congress appear a magnificent demonstration of fighting spirit on the part of the workers and of a will to preparedness. Nothing better could be asked for than these decisions, provided they were accompanied by the necessary actions. We have now to see how far this demonstration answering the vapourings of the Government spokesmen was accompanied by the same resolute and steady activity towards preparedness as the Government side had undertaken. This was the question to the fore in everyone's mind at the Trades Union Congress.

Another Conference, held a fortnight later, was presently to reassure the capitalists. But before the Liverpool Conference of the Labour Party was held, even during the last days of the Scarborough Congress, there were not a few who were able to find comfort in

certain circumstances of the Scarborough Conference. They were re-assured by the fact that the Congress votes on proposals involving no action were very high, but that the majority sank at once in proportion as the resolutions necessitated action on the part of the Trade Union leaders; while finally, in the case where action was mostly required, namely, the increase of forces to the General Council, a dilatory resolution (see Appendix), was chosen instead. Still more significant and comforting was the reflection that whatever resolutions the Congress carried would have to be operated by the General Council, on which the elections had replaced Mr. J. H. Thomas, who was considered a person most unlikely to indulge in either revolutionary activities or revolutionary phrases. In fact, the Congress had been Left Wing in its resolutions, but Right Wing in its selection of membership of the General Council.

The Liverpool Conference of the Labour Party, however, removed all doubts, confirmed all the comforting deductions drawn, and mitigated the comprehensions raised by the Scarborough resolutions. The Liverpool Conference of the Labour Party, held at the end of September, turned down every Left Wing resolution, expelled the Communists, and, generally speaking, behaved with the terrific discretion of an enormously distended Labour Cabinet. So far as demonstrations were concerned, Liverpool may be considered as having cancelled out Scarborough. How instantaneous was this effect may be judged from the fact that the Home Secretary and the Conservative Government only waited for its conclusion to set in train preparations for the arrest and trial of the Leaders of the Communist Party.

Apart from such demonstrations and counter-demonstrations by Scarborough and Liverpool, we

have to examine what actual preparations were made.

Up to Christmas, and after, it must be concluded that preparations on the side of the Trade Unions were still to seek. It was not a question of the degree of preparation. There was simply no preparation at all. It became clear as September passed into October, and October gave way to November, that every reliance was being placed not on preparation but on the work of the Coal Commission. Whatever happened, the Coal Commission was likely to provide the necessary solution; and it almost appeared as if its advent had relieved the General Council of all responsibilities for the time being. The view that the Coal Commission itself was part of the moral preparation made by the Government for the attack it intended when the subsidy period was over, was left on one side.

How far, it may be asked, was this lack of preparedness common to the greater part of the Movement? The answer is that it was common for the simple reason that everyone looked to the General Council to give the lead. Indeed in many places it was assumed that the General Council were secretly—as secretly as the Government—making the full preparations needed. The presence on the Council of a Left Wing (comprising Purcell, Swales, Hicks, Tillett, Bromley and others) lent colour to this idea. To assume anything else seemed inconceivable.

This unpreparedness extended especially to those sections of the movement—Trade Unions, Trades Councils, Trade Union Branches, Co-operative Societies—that are generally described as Right Wing sections; but certain other sections (mainly Trades Councils and Trade Union Branches) received a powerful impetus from the general agitation for preparedness carried on by the Communist Party and by a number of Left Wing Journals. The Communist Party organ, the

Workers' Weekly, in its first issue after "Red Friday," had an editorial in which it set forth the need for preparedness in general and specified the number of actual measures that must be taken.

Further, in that third week of August, the Communist Party sent a letter to the Trade Union Congress General Council and to the Labour Party Executive Committee, on the theme "tell the forces," namely, carry propaganda for the approaching wage struggle into the ranks of the Army and Navy and Air Forces. It brought upon itself little thanks and much abuse from both the *Daily Mail* and some of the Labour Party Leaders; while milder criticism expressed seemed to hint that if the Communist Party would only keep quiet, the General Council, or, at any rate, various responsible persons in the Trade Union Movement, would actually carry out this admittedly necessary propaganda. Too great reliance need not be placed on this suggestion.

For week after week thereafter, right up to Christmas and beyond, the Communist Party in its circular instructions to locals, and in its organisation (together with such Left Wing journals as shared its standpoint on this matter, e.g., *The Sunday Worker* and *The Labour Monthly*) steadily, unceasingly, perpetually pointed the moral of the July events, called for preparedness, and drew attention to item after item of preparedness on the other side, whether Fascist or whether Governmental.

Liverpool was so gratifying in its denial of the spirit of preparedness, and the Communists so disturbing in their insistence upon preparedness, that the Government took measures to suppress, so far as it could, the Communist Party. It is not necessary here to relate the story of the trial of the twelve Communists, the raid on the Headquarters of the Party,

the use afterwards made by the Government (and later still by Mr. Arthur Henderson) of papers seized from the Communist Party headquarters, or the effect it had in increasing the membership of the Communist Party. All that is necessary here is to point out that in the view of everyone, the arrest and prosecutions were judged to be part of the Government's preparedness for the coming offensive; it was an attempt to strike terror. It was followed a month later by wholesale arrests, prosecutions and sentences on Anthracite strikers in the Ammanford district of South Wales.

During and after the Communist trials, the Communist Party continued its campaign of preparedness and finally at the beginning of January, 1926, when more than half the Subsidy period was over, when it was clear that the Trade Union Congress General Council was showing no sign of taking its responsibility seriously, the Communist Party held an extended session of its Executive Committee on the 8th January and there put forward a Programme of Action, which appeared in the *Workers' Weekly* under the headings, "Vast Struggle Begins," "Whole Class must Unite," "A common minimum wanted for All Workers."

DOCUMENTS.

SCARBOROUGH T.U.C.: MR. SWALES' SPEECH.

D.20.

"Union policy henceforth will be to recover lost ground, to re-establish and improve our standards of wages, hours, and working conditions, and to co-ordinate and intensify Trade Union action for the winning of a larger measure of control in industry for the workers. And this policy renders necessary a greater degree of Trade Union unity.

"The demonstration of Trade Union solidarity connected with the miners' struggle, a month ago, has given hope to the whole movement. The result will strengthen every section of working-class organisation and help the unions to become 100 per cent. organised. That must be our aim.

"Those of us who were privileged to share in the victory and who helped to rally the forces of Trade Unionism behind the miners, lived a glorious week—one that will ever be remembered. It was historical.

"As we marshalled our forces, day by day, to meet the pending attack of the representatives of capitalism, the response of all sections to defend the standard of wages and hours was most gratifying.

"It must be our work to harness that spirit to our organising work, and weave it into the fabric and structure of the Trade Union Movement of the future. The capitalist class will learn lessons from this skirmish, and will use their great influences in present-day society to compel a retreat."

SCARBOROUGH T.U.C. RESOLUTIONS.

D.21.

Workshop Committees.

"Congress further considers that strong well-organised Shop Committees are indispensable weapons in the struggle to force the capitalists to relinquish their grip on industry, and, therefore, pledges itself to do all in its power to develop and strengthen workshop organisation."

International Trade Union Unity.

"This Congress records appreciation of the General Council's efforts to promote international unity, and urges the incoming General Council to do everything in their power towards securing world-wide unity of the Trade Union Movement through an all-inclusive International Federation of Trade Unions."

Imperialism.

"This Trades Union Congress believes that the domination of non-British peoples by the British Government is a form of capitalist exploitation, having for its object the securing for British capitalists: (1) of cheap sources of raw materials; (2) the right to exploit cheap and unorganised labour and to use the competition of that labour to degrade the workers' standards in Great Britain.

"It declares its complete opposition to Imperialism, and resolves: (1) to support the workers in all parts of the British Empire to organise the Trade Unions and political parties in order to further their interests, and (2) to support the right of all peoples in the British Empire to self-determination, including the right to choose complete separation from the Empire."

China.

"This Congress instructs the General Council to at once get into touch with the organised workers' political bodies, with a view

to doing everything possible to put a stop to the murderous crimes being perpetrated against our working-class Chinese comrades who are struggling to improve their horrible working conditions.

"It also condemns in the strongest possible language the use of British armed forces as strike-breakers in the interests of the gang of unscrupulous Capitalists and Imperialists who are exploiting the lives of men, women, and even children of tender age in China at the present time, and insists on their immediate withdrawal."

DAWES PLAN.

"That this Trades Union Congress condemns the enslavement of the German workers by the Dawes plan. It declares that the low wages and long hours existing in that country are directly due to the successful attempt of the employers to place the burden of this plan on the German workers.

"Further, we pledge ourselves to assist the German workers in every possible way to improve their standard of life and resolve to support the General Council in its efforts to obtain International Trade Union unity which will enable the workers to fight on an international scale for the repudiation of the Dawes Plan."

POWERS OF GENERAL COUNCIL.

"That the Composite Resolution No. 2 and Amendments in reference to the duties of General Council be referred to the General Council with instructions to examine the problem in all its bearings, with power to consult the executive of the affiliated unions, and to report to a Special Conference of the executives concerned their considered recommendations on the subject."

D.22.

COMMUNIST EXECUTIVE PROGRAMME OF ACTION.

(*Workers' Weekly*, January 15, 1920).

The present Industrial Situation and the crisis looming ahead fully justifies the Communist Party's warning to the workers that the Capitalist Class is determined to return to the offensive, on an even more gigantic scale than last July.

The Miners, after the breathing space bought for the owners by the means of a subsidy, and the sham impartiality of the Coal Commission, are now threatened with an open attack on the seven-hour day, on the Miners' Federation and on wages.

The owners have thrown disguise to the winds.

The attack on the miners is the most violent and unashamed; but workers in most of the industries are faced with similar attacks.

The railway are threatened with wage cuts; the engineers, with longer hours; the builders with abolition of craft control won by years of sacrifice.

Coupled with this, nearly two million workers remain unemployed.

By artificial and brutal administrative restrictions, thousands have been struck off the register, and refused unemployment benefit. They have become completely dependent on the Poor Law Authorities, and the crushing burden of maintaining this huge army of reserve workers against possible strikes or lockouts falls entirely upon local taxation.

These facts, taken together with the steady, if unobstrusive organisation of the O.M.S., point to a definite determination on the part of the British capitalists to prevent a repetition of Red Friday, to challenge the organised labour movement and smash it, and to drive the workers down to coolie conditions. By this means they hope to achieve the impossible task of stabilising their system, undermined by war, ruin of foreign markets, chaos in production. and hideous exploitation of colonial workers.

The struggle now opening is of a magnitude hitherto unknown, But this enlarged meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party believes that the workers can meet the capitalist attack and smash it, as on Red Friday.

More, we believe that the British Workers can turn their defensive into an offensive, and present a common demand for better conditions which will be the prelude to a complete victory over the capitalists.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party declares that the following steps are urgently necessary in order to ensure that the workers' forces are properly organised against the capitalist attack, and instructs all Party members to regard a campaign for those measures as their main and immediate task in their respective Trade Unions :—

1. Summoning by the General Council of a Conference of Trade Union Executive Committees, in accordance with Scarborough decisions, to give wider powers to the General Council to lead the whole workers' industrial army.

2. In addition to the campaign for granting full Executive powers to the General Council, the completion of the Workers' Industrial Alliance, to reinforce the workers' defensive preparations against the coming crisis, and, in particular, the inclusion of the N.U.R., A.E.U., Boilermakers, and General Workers, etc.

3. A working agreement between the General Council and the C.W.S. to ensure provisioning the workers, and a policy of mutual support between the two National centres of the Trade Unions and Co-operative Movements, the T.U.C. and the Co-operative Union.

4. Formation of Factory Committees elected by all workers irrespective of craft or sex, in accordance with the Scarborough resolution, to ensure unity of the workers from the bottom, and the calling by the Trades Councils and District Committees of conferences to ensure union support for these committees.

5. A National Campaign for 100 per cent. Trade Unionism, including a National Show Cards week. Special attention to be

paid to bringing all young workers, including apprentices, into the Unions.

6. Organisation of Workers' Defence Corps, composed of Trade Unionists, and controlled by Trades Councils, to protect Trade Union liberties against the Fascisti, and calling upon the General Council to take steps to place the workers' case before the workers in the Army, Navy and Air Force.

7. Formulation of a common Programme for the whole movement (£4 a week of 44 hours) supplementary to the special demands of each industry (Railway All-Grades Programme, Miners' Cost-of-Living Scale, Engineers 20/- demand, etc.).

8. The strengthening of the relations between the General Council and the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, in order to secure the realisation of the Unemployed demands, as a counter to the capitalist attempt to force the unemployed into black-legging. (*Workers' Weekly*, January 15, 1920).

Chapter VI

THE MINERS' PLANS FOR PREPAREDNESS

Before the events of July, 1925, narrated above, it had already been obvious that a storm was gathering in the coal industry. The first muttering of that storm indeed had been heard as far back as the summer months of 1924, but the Parliamentary and electoral excitements of the later autumn of that year had diverted attention from such social barometers as the figures of export trade, of furnaces in blast, and of the coal-mining quarterly ascertainment results.

As the winter came to an end and the spring of 1925 drew on it became clear that the mine-owners would not only seek to terminate the 1924 agreement, but would probably demand a downward revision of terms more drastic even than those embodied in the 1921 agreement. What would these new terms be? During the winter it became clear that wages alone were no longer the object of attack. The second line of working-class standards, hours of labour, was now to be attacked.

The full circle had now been turned. The revolutionary years of 1918, 1919 and 1920 were past and gone; their meagre concessions of higher wages and shorter hours were now to be revoked. In the case of wages there had been a steady diminution for over four years; but up till now hours had been left unattacked. This was to be the case no longer. And unmistakably, in many of the employers' journals, in many of the daily newspapers and the Capitalist press generally, a campaign against the Seven Hours'

Act was steadily being carried on in the winter of 1924-25 and the spring of 1925.

At the same time an attempt had been made to induce the Miners' Federation (in the Joint Investigations with the Coal Owners) to agree to a lengthening of hours. It is true that the facts adduced at this joint enquiry only partially covered the field; they were indeed facts chosen *ad hoc* and the somewhat flimsy and amateurish economics of the mine-owners' officials were later torn to pieces by more skilful and authoritative capitalists such as Sir Josiah Stamp, in the MacMillan Court of Enquiry. The point, however, to be made clear here is not the validity or otherwise of the arguments put forward on either side, but the fact that a conflict in the industry was rapidly drawing nearer and was clearly perceivable by everyone in the industry. It might be postponed by some new circumstances, it might (though this was more unlikely) be averted by submission of one side or other, but these were remote possibilities. They had little weight with either side. Each side made plans for an approaching conflict.

Into the plans made by the mineowners we need not enter here. It is on record in Mr. Cole's book *Labour in the Coal Mining Industry*, that the decontrol of 1921 which precipitated the disastrous lockout of that summer was preceded by private negotiations between the Government and the Coal-owners. Similarly in July, 1925, it was fairly clear that private negotiations had taken place. Into this, however, it is not necessary to go, as the plans there matured were so effectually checkmated as described in our first chapter.

What plans could the miners make? They, too, had the memory of 1921. They had then relied upon the broken reed of the Triple Alliance. This time it

was felt that an industrial conflict of wages and possibly of hours would have such far-reaching effects that the wage-earners in every district must be affected by it. It was clear from the experience of 1921 that any resistance by one industry alone to the employers' offensive would end, at worst in a crushing defeat, and at best in a heartrendingly long process of mutual exhaustion. Miners' officials and the miners' secretaries therefore set about advocating in the first place a broader-based alliance of trade unions (the idea of which had been originated by the Amalgamated Engineering Union in the spring of 1924—see Appendix).

When, therefore, that idea had been widely enough spread, they set about getting conferences called to discuss the idea and put it into shape. The campaign of the Miners' Secretary during the winter and spring of 1925 had been devoted on the one hand to building up support for resistance to longer hours or any other worsening of the standard of life; on the other hand to an advocacy of an Industrial Alliance. The idea matured in the late spring, too late indeed for it to be effective before the July crisis. So that when the July crisis actually came it was the General Council, and not the proposed Industrial Alliance, which effectually championed the cause of the miners, made it their own, and made it victorious.

The crisis past, the miners once more took up their project. On September 5, the Miners' Delegate Conference ratified the draft Constitution adopted by the meeting on July 17th of the unions concerned. On September 9th, the National Union of Foundry Workers adopted it. Within another week the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen and the Electrical Trades Union had notified their adhesion. Various sectional meetings were held and finally on November 5th, 1925, a delegate conference was held

in Essex Hall, London, to consider and ratify the proposed Constitution of Industrial Alliance. The result of their deliberations is printed in Appendix D.26. The details have also their importance, but here all that need be quoted is the first two paragraphs and the ninth paragraph which made the Alliance *binding* on its members :—

" *Objects.*—To create by means of an alliance of the specified organisations, a means of mutual support, to assist any or all of the allied organisations in defending the hours of labour and wage standards, and securing advancement of the standard of living, or to take action to secure acceptance of, or to defend, any principle of an industrial character which may be deemed vital by the allied organisations."

" *Constitution.*—The Alliance shall consist of organisations representing workpeople engaged in all forms of Transport (Railway, Docks, Waterways, Road, Sea, Air), Engineering, Shipbuilding, Iron and Steel Production, Mining, and all forms of Power production and distribution."

" *Conditions of Membership of the Alliance.*—The conditions of membership of this Alliance shall involve the allied organisation in definitely undertaking, notwithstanding anything in their agreements or constitutions to the contrary, to act as directed by the General Conference of this Alliance, and each shall periodically (as may be determined by the Executive Council) supply a full return of their membership and the industries in which they enter. Nothing in this constitution shall interfere with the right of the allied organisations promoting movements on their own behalf, but in such cases they shall not be entitled to the assistance of the Alliance."

It will be seen that the objects were wide enough almost to form the basis of a complete pan-industrial federation. Further, it should be noticed that the industries constituting the alliance were those usually described as heavy industries or the essential auxiliary

industries of power and transport. Textiles, though important, is omitted; the less essential auxiliary industries of building and of printing are also omitted; while all finishing industries and, of course, all luxury industries whatsoever, are equally left out. It was essentially an alliance of Heavy Industry Unions, stricken by the post-war decline of British capitalism, together with Transport, which must be immediately affected by any dispute in heavy industry. Finally, it is shown in paragraph 9 what an over-ruling power was to be granted to the General Conference of the Alliance. In a sense this proposal was nothing less than to create a Supreme War Council of Industrial Allies. It was a carefully worked out scheme which steered clear of difficulties that had been encountered by the previous Triple Industrial Alliance. It represented the maximum effort of thinking on the part of the organisations most likely to be affected by a continued employers' offensive. The project obtained immediate support from several of the most important Unions. The Iron and Steel Trades Federation and the Engineers were well disposed; the Associated Locomotive Engineers and Firemen were prepared to go right through with it (and there had been a declaration of the Miners' President that if one single Union were prepared to join the alliance then the proposed organisation would proceed).

But the effect of these adhesions to the plan was neutralised, at least in part, by the amendments proposed by the National Union of Railwaymen at the Conference on November 5th. The N.U.R. proposed, as an amendment to the Constitution, that a condition of membership should be the preparation of a scheme of fusion between the Unions in any given industry. This apparently harmless and laudable amendment was, of course, aimed at the Locomotive Engineers and

Firemen of which Mr. Bromley was Secretary. It was known that Mr. Bromley's policy and the policy of the Executive of his Union, was to refuse to enter into any such discussion and proposals for fusion with the N.U.R. The carrying, therefore, of such an amendment would have meant defeat and consequent withdrawal of Mr. Bromley, carrying with him a most important section of the railwaymen. The defeat, on the other hand, of this amendment would outrage the feelings of the delegates of the N.U.R. and cause them to subscribe whole-heartedly to the doubts and difficulties already voiced by Mr. Thomas. By this amendment raised, it became clear that if the N.U.R. lost, even supposing that all the other unions present at the Conference were prepared to enter the alliance, the Railwaymen were not prepared to do it.

In several other cases, postponements were found to be necessary to enable ballots of the members to be taken. In the case of the A.E.U., it was not until the second week of January that the proposals were submitted for ballot vote of their members. Five weeks later the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation ballot showed a large majority in favour of the alliance. Finally, on March 23, four and a half months after the November conference, and within five weeks of the end of April, the A.E.U. decided to join by 70,695 votes to 31,423. A week earlier the Boilermakers' Society had voted against, and a day later the Workers' Union decided in favour. These postponements and tardy ballots with the atmosphere of uncertainty which they introduced, would have been material cause for delay and a means of preventing the proposed alliance from being brought to the birth. Together with the "No Preparedness" atmosphere they were conclusive. The proposed Industrial Alliance, for which in the most important unions the workers were

voting overwhelmingly, had already received its death through fatal delay. It was strangled at birth.

We have, therefore, to turn from this project to the other plans of the Miners' Federation. These they entertained with the object of continuing the support already given to them the previous July by the General Council. The miners' main plan had failed in the proposed alliance. They would have been a member (and a very important member) of a group of unions associated for the purposes of mutual defence and for other purposes. In the Trades Union Congress, and on the General Council, the position was different. On the General Council they held 2 seats out of 32. The T.U.C. was constituted not for purposes of mutual defence, but for all sorts of other purposes. It included Unions which no one had hitherto reckoned upon as components of any effective militant compact or entente; it was the contrast between the Supreme War Council of the Allies and the General Council of the League of Nations. The swift hard-hitting decisions of Versailles have ever since contrasted oddly with the dilatory and benevolent admonitions of Geneva. No wonder the miners persevered with their original plan of a proposed Industrial Alliance. The parallel can be carried even a little further. The effectiveness of Geneva as a body having authority dated chiefly from the time when the Allies (the ci-devant War Council) sat upon the Geneva assembly *en bloc*. In the same way the Heavy Industry, Transport, Power Trade Unions would have been able to reach a common agreement for a common purpose. They could have then cast their weight in the most effective manner in the General Council of the Unions meeting at Eccleston Square.

It was a large plan, widely conceived; and had there only been an homogeneity of outlook amongst

the leaders of the Labour movement, the plan would have been successful. But there was no such homogeneity, and without such a precondition the best-laid plans are brought to nothing. With this plan of campaign, coupled with full preparedness, a clear line was possible; without it there was a dangerous possibility of drift. The machinery of the Trade Union movement was either to have been recast in such a plan as this: or in the absence of such recasting it was to exhibit its inaptitude for the great events of the year 1925-26. A favourable conjunction of circumstances might lead to July, 1925, but the odds are usually against such favourable conjunctions; and in the ordinary course there was much danger, there were many rocks in the ocean upon which our unseaworthy ship set forth.

APPENDIX AND DOCUMENTS

ORIGIN OF THE INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE

THE origin of the idea of the Industrial Alliance appears to have come not from the Miners' Federation in the first instance but from the Amalgamated Engineering Union. The National Committee at its meeting on May 27th, 1924, had passed the following decision :—

D.23.

"That realising the poverty-stricken condition of the engineering workers and the futility of securing any substantial relief by means of negotiations with the employers, instructs the E.C. to approach the Miners' Federation, N.U.R., Transport Workers, and other unions as may be deemed necessary, with a definite proposal for the formation of an offensive alliance against the employers concerned, and to call upon the allied unions to prepare a combined movement for the purpose of securing adequate wages and tolerable conditions of labour for all workers involved."

It will be noted that the Resolution definitely stresses

the poverty-stricken conditions of the engineering workers and for this purpose urges *offensive* action.

When this Resolution was duly transmitted to the Miners' Federation it was not immediately taken up. The actual letters that passed are as follows :—

D.24.

To the respective Secretaries :—
Miners' Federation of Great Britain and Transport and General Workers' Union.

20th June, 1924.

Dear Sir,—At the meeting of our National Committee, which was held in York on the 27th-31st May, 1924 (inclusive), a resolution was adopted instructing my Executive Council to approach the Miners' Federation and the Transport and General Workers' Union with a view to the formation of an offensive alliance against the employers concerned, in order to prepare a combined movement for the purpose of securing adequate wages and tolerable conditions of labour to all workers covered by our respective unions.

I am directed by my Executive Council to state that they will be obliged if you will bring the foregoing to the notice of your Executive, and have to add that if agreeable to you they will be pleased to make arrangements for a joint meeting to further consider this proposal.

Yours faithfully,

A. H. SMETHURST,

General Secretary.

Miners' Federation of Great Britain,
23rd June, 1924.

A. H. SMETHURST, Esq.

Dear Sir,—In regard to the resolution passed at your National Committee approaching the M.F.G.B. and the T. & G.W.U. with the view of an offensive alliance against the employers concerned, I may say that I am of opinion that this question should be raised at the next Trades Union Congress.

It is there that a united front should be formed, by giving the General Council all power to act in industrial disputes. However, I shall bring this question before my next Committee meeting, so that they can discuss the whole situation. It is very desirable that we should prepare our organisations to be ready for a real offensive against the combined employers in this country.

Yours faithfully,

A. J. COOK, Secretary.

It appeared as if the matter was to be allowed to rest there. However, at the Swansea Annual Conference of the Miners' Federation, held on July 8th, 1924, and following days, the following significant resolution from the Forest of Dean :—

"That steps be taken to form an alliance with the National Union of Railwaymen, the Transport Workers' Federation, and any other Union where it is practicable,"

was referred to the Executive to deal with.

It was not, however, until six months had passed and the Miners began to feel themselves threatened that they approached the Engineers and reproposed an alliance.

D.25.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain,
55 Russell Square, London, W.C.1,
26th January, 1925.

The General Secretary, Amalgamated Engineering Union.

Dear Sir,—In pursuance of a resolution passed by our Annual Conference last year, my Executive Committee has instructed me to write to your organisation and other organisations with a view to a meeting being held between our Executive Committees to discuss the question of rendering mutual support to our respective memberships in times of necessity.

My Committee desire that such a meeting shall take place as speedily as possible, and I should be glad, therefore, if in the first place you would let us know as speedily as possible if your organisation is agreeable to such a meeting taking place.

A similar letter has been addressed to the National Union of Railwaymen, the Transport Workers' Federation, and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.

Awaiting your reply.

Yours fraternally,

A. J. COOK, Secretary.

3rd February, 1925.

A. J. COOK, Esq., Secretary,
Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

Dear Sir,—Your letter of the 26th ult. inviting representatives of our Union to a joint meeting with yourselves, National Union of Railwaymen, Transport Workers' Federation, and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, has been considered by my Executive Council, and I am instructed to state that my

Executive will be pleased to attend a joint meeting of the character indicated.

In this connection I have also to respectfully direct your attention to my letter, dated the 20th June, 1924, *in which you will note the same principle enunciated.*

Yours faithfully,

A. H. SMETHURST,

General Secretary.

Other unions were not so prompt to reply as the Engineers. It was not till four months had elapsed (and until it was well-nigh too late to be effective) that the Preliminary Meeting of Unions concerned was held on June 4, 1925.

APPENDIX—D.26.

CONSTITUTION OF INDUSTRIAL ALLIANCE

(*November*, 1925).

1.—Objects.

To create through a Trade Union Alliance a means of mutual support and to assist any or all of the allied organisations :—

(*a*) To defend hours of labour and wages standards.

(*b*) To promote or to defend any vital principle of an industrial character.

To take such steps for mutual co-operation on economic and industrial matters as may from time to time be decided upon.

2.—Constitution.

The Alliance shall consist of organisations representing workpeople engaged in all forms of transport (Railway, Docks, Waterways, Road, Sea, Air), Engineering, Shipbuilding, Iron and Steel production, Mining, and all forms of Power production and Distribution.

3.—Government of the Alliance (General Conference).

For the government of the Alliance there shall be a General Conference. Those eligible to attend must be either officers and/or members of the Executive Council of an allied organisation. Such Conference shall meet at least once per year in London ; also at such times as may be called by the Executive Council as hereinafter provided.

Voting at such Conference shall be :—

(*a*) By Societies.

(*b*) First by show of hands.

(*c*) If challenged, then by proportional voting, as follows :—

(1) For each allied organisation with a membership up to 50,000, ... ONE VOTE

(2) For each allied organisation with over 50,000 members up to 200,000, ... TWO VOTES

(3) For each allied organisation with over 200,000 members up to 500,000, THREE VOTES

(4) For each allied organisation with over 500,000 members, ... FOUR VOTES

4.—Executive Council.

The Executive Council shall consist of appointed persons as follows :—

(*a*) For each allied organisation with a membership up to 50,000, ... ONE MEMBER

(*b*) For each allied organisation with over 50,000 up to 200,000 members, ... TWO MEMBERS

(*c*) For each allied organisation with over 200,000 members up to 500,000 members, THREE MEMBERS

(*d*) For each allied organisation with over 500,000 members, ... FOUR MEMBERS

Each allied organisation shall pay the expenses of their own representatives upon the Executive Council.

Each of the Allied Executive Council shall have power to appoint or change its representative or representatives upon the Executive Council.

5.—Duties of the Executive Council.

The Executive Council shall circulate all its minutes to the allied organisations.

They shall, as hereinafter provided, call meetings of the General Conference, and shall be the only recognised authority for carrying out the decisions of the Conference.

They shall keep the General Council of Trades Union Congress informed of all developments, and where necessity arises endeavour to secure their co-operation in the co-ordination of the whole trade union movement.

6.—Procedure for securing Assistance of the Alliance.

(*a*) Any allied organisation being involved in an official dispute in respect of which the assistance of the Alliance may be required under the provision of Clause 1—' Objects ' of this Constitution—shall, before committing themselves to a national or general stoppage, communicate the whole of the facts and circumstances to the Executive of the Alliance through the Secretary, and shall also at each stage of the dispute keep the Executive informed. The Executive shall equally keep the allied organisations informed with regard to the dispute.

(*b*) On receipt of a definite request for assistance, the Secretary shall immediately call the Executive Council, who shall examine all the facts and circumstances, and if in their judgment the circumstances warrant action, they shall, within fourteen days, call the General Conference, and shall submit a report definitely setting forth the nature of the dispute and the proposed form of the assistance to be given. The Executive Council shall not have power to take action without the authority of the General Conference. The General Conference shall not be empowered to grant assistance unless satisfied that the allied organisation making application has observed its own constitution and procedure.

(*c*) Upon the General Conference sanctioning assistance, the conduct of the movement shall then pass into the control of the Executive Council, who shall work in consultation with the union or unions involved, and shall keep the allied organisations fully informed, and shall, as necessity arises, call together the General Conference and report.

7.—Forms in which assistance may be given.

(*a*) Negotiation.
(*b*) Financial.
(*c*) Partial Sympathetic Action.
(*d*) Sympathetic Action by stages.
(*e*) Complete Sympathetic Action.

In each case the Executive Council shall clearly set forth in their report to the General Conference the form and extent of the assistance proposed by them.

8.—Settlement of Disputes.

If, as a result of the intervention of the Alliance, terms are obtained which may be regarded as acceptable, the Executive Council, after the fullest consultation with the society on whose behalf assistance has been rendered, shall report same to the General Conference for ratification.

The General Conference shall have full power to order or terminate assistance.

9.—Conditions of Membership of the Alliance.

The conditions of membership of this Alliance shall involve the allied organisations in definitely undertaking, notwithstanding anything in their agreements or constitutions to the contrary, to act as directed by the General Conference of this Alliance, and each shall periodically (as may be determined by the Executive Council) supply a full return of their membership and the industries in which they enter.

Nothing in this constitution shall interfere with the right of the allied organisations promoting movements on their own behalf, but in such cases they shall not be entitled to the assistance of the Alliance.

10.—Officers.

There shall be a Chairman and a Secretary, both of whom shall be elected by the General Conference.

11.—Finance.

In order to meet administrative costs, each allied organisation shall contribute 5/- per thousand members per annum, or such other sum as the General Conference may, from time to time, determine.

12.—Financial Assistance.

In order to render financial assistance, the General Conference shall be empowered to call upon the allied organisations to subscribe such sums per thousand members as may be deemed necessary by the General Conference.

13.—Observance of Constitution.

The procedure under this constitution must be strictly conformed to by any allied organisation desiring assistance from the Alliance.

14.—Withdrawal.

Any allied organisation desiring to withdraw from the Alliance shall give one year's notice in writing, and during the currency of such notice they shall observe the constitution of the Alliance.

Chapter VII

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE COAL INDUSTRY

It will be remembered that a proposal for a Royal Commission, or for some sort of inquiry, was put forward by the Prime Minister at a time when there was no question of a subsidy, when, indeed, a subsidy had been explicitly ruled out.

The inquiry, which had served a certain purpose at this stage of the negotiations, was taken over into the next stage when the circumstances had completely changed round. The inquiry in this later stage now became the ostensible reason for the Government giving a subsidy until such time as the inquiry could be carried through, and the results of it made effective.

A period of nine months was allowed for this process, but actually that nine months was to be employed in systematic preparation of the kind defiantly announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his August speech, and repeated by the same gentleman, with some confidence, in his House of Commons speech of December 10th. It was therefore not perhaps very surprising that the proposal for an inquiry, having served its purpose, should fall into the background, but finally, some five weeks after the crisis, the appointment of the Coal Commission was announced. Its terms of reference were as follows :—

"To inquire into, and report upon, the economic position of the Coal Industry, and the conditions affecting it, and to make any recommendations for improvement thereof."—Cmd. 2,600, Page lx.

The terms of the Royal Warrant appointing the

Commission are given in Appendix D.27. The Chairman of the Commission was Sir Herbert Samuel; the other Members were :—

Sir William Beveridge.
Gen. The Hon. Sir Herbert Lawrence, G.C.B.
Mr. Kenneth Lee.

It will be remembered that the Sankey Commission consisted of a Chairman and twelve Members, six of whom were miners or acceptable to the miners, and six of whom were mineowners, or acceptable to the mineowners. The Buckmaster Court of Inquiry in 1924 and the Macmillan Inquiry of 1925 were each composed of a trio, one of whom in each case was a representative of the workers. In the new Royal Commission there was no such concession made. Working-class representatives were expressly excluded. This apparently chimed in with the wishes of the Mining Association, for the representatives of that body in their evidence to the Samuel Commission strongly denounced the partiality to the Sankey Commission. Mr. Lee, the Secretary of the Mining Association, stated that "the Sankey Commission was a partisan inquiry," while Mr. Evan Williams, President of the Mining Association, observed :—

"As to the Sankey Commission, I regard that as one of the greatest disasters that ever happened to the Coal Industry of this country."

What was the personnel of the new Commission? Sir Herbert Samuel, the Chairman, with extensive family connections in the financial world, had a very considerable experience in government, both of British and Colonial peoples. In the Liberal Government of 1905 onwards he passed in succession through the offices of Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Postmaster-General, President of the Local Government

Board and Secretary of State for Home Affairs. In 1920 he became the British High Commissioner in Palestine and occupied this post for five years thereafter.

Sir William Beveridge's public activities previously started as a leader-writer to the "Morning Post" from 1906 to 1908, and developed in the Board of Trade, where he was mainly concerned in the establishment of Labour Exchanges. During the war he was in the Ministry of Munitions, afterwards in the Ministry of Food. Later he resigned from the Civil Service to take up the Directorship of the London School of Economics.

General Sir Herbert Lawrence is managing partner of Glyn, Mills & Co., the well-known Banking house, and is also on the Board of several other important Companies :—

The Anglo Austrian Bank, Ltd.
The Bank of Roumania, Ltd.
Central London Railway.
Electrical Holdings, Ltd.
Dalgety & Co., Ltd.
Imperial Ottoman Bank.
L.M.S. Railway.
Sun Insurance Office.
Sun Life Assurance Society.
Vickers, Ltd.

Mr. Kenneth Lee is Chairman of Tootal, Broadhurst, Lee & Co. (the great Cotton firm) and is Chairman of the District Bank. Some of the concerns on which General Lawrence and Mr. Lee sat belonged to the Federation of British Industries ; and through Vickers Limited, General Lawrence had an interest in coal. Here we may quote a phrase used in "The Coal Crisis" :—

"The Government, of course, represented this Com-

mission as an impartial body. It is true it is not directly representative of the Mining Association, but it is difficult to imagine any small body of persons more completely representative of Capitalist interests, and more completely trained in approaching matters from the Capitalist standpoint."

The Royal Commission, thus composed, held its first public sitting for the taking of evidence on the 15th October, 1925, and its last sitting for the taking of evidence on the 14th January, 1926. The report itself was completed on the 6th March, 1926, and published within a day or two thereafter. It contained a survey of the whole industry, in some 300 pages, buttressed by three volumes of evidence and statistical material, while dovetailed into the survey of the Industry were a number of recommendations.

In a subsequent chapter we shall deal with the reception of the report and the progress of negotiations that took place from the date of its appearance. Here we are concerned only to consider the report regarded as one of the means by which the public opinion was "prepared" for the renewed attack on the miners' wages, which was made in April of 1926. Roughly speaking, the report can be summed up as a proposal for reorganisation of the Mining Industry, to be put into effect at some future date, together with proposals for the reduction in wages, to take effect at once. A summary of the finding and recommendations of the report appears as Appendix D.28.

From the point of view of the immediate crisis, of a wages struggle between the employers and the miners in the Coal Industry, the central feature of the report was its recommendations that wages should be reduced. Everything in the report tends to this end, and everything tending away from this end is excluded from the report.

It used to be the fashion years ago amongst the School of Art that devoted especial attention to the technique of Rembrandt, to show how, in some of the pictures of that Master, every line in the composition trained and drew the eye to the central feature of the whole picture. In the same way, the Coal Commission report was so composed as to draw attention to its central feature. The artist, we are told, must exercise the power of selection, must learn to omit. A similar gift appears to have been bestowed upon those who drafted the Coal Commission report. A single instance of this will suffice.

The question of the Foreign Market is one of some complexity, but out of this complexity there can be clearly seen two great gaps where British Export Trade has vanished. The one is the Italian Market, the other is the Russian Market. In the case of the Italian Market, in 1924 the diminution (since 1913) of British coal exports, amounting to 3,489,000 metric tons, was almost exactly balanced by the increase of German coal exports amounting to some 3,444,000 tons. Practically all of this German coal was coal delivered under the Reparations Section of the Treaty of Versailles, as implemented by the Dawes plan, embodied in the London Agreement of August, 1924. Furthermore, in 1925 an arrangement had been made by which the Fascist Government of Italy agreed, in return for concessions in Abyssinia, etc., to begin payment of the Italian Debt into the British Treasury. Now Italy, a relatively poor country, can pay this debt to the British Government in practice only through receiving an equivalent amount, or more, in reparations from Germany. It is true that the details of the Anglo-Italian partitioning of Abyssinia were not made public until the summer of 1926, but Sir Herbert Samuel, occupying the Governor-Generalship

of Palestine, was bound to be cognisant of the moves of British Foreign Policy in North Africa and the Middle East.

It was clear then that Reparations coal would continue to be taken by Italy and that this was bound to have an effect on the British Export Trade. The Commission, however, fought shy of any conclusion which might upset the Reparations Agreement. The Treaty of Versailles, the Dawes Plan and all the arrangements about Reparations were treated as things of the same order as the geological formation of the coal measures, something, that is to say, which could not be altered, must be taken for granted, and to which the conditions of the industry must conform. They did not for a moment put forward the obvious solution, that for the sake of the Coal Industry the Reparations Agreement should be annulled, the Dawes Plan torn up, and the Treaty of Versailles revised.

Similarly with the Russian Market. The Russian Market had absorbed some 4,000,000 odd tons of coal before the war. After the war practically no coal was being exported to Russia. The Soviet Union, it is true, was not prepared to take coal; but it was prepared to take iron and steel and manufactured metal goods to the extent of at least £100,000,000, purchases for which long credits, if not a short term loan, were obviously necessary. Now, into the making of every ton of steel there go four tons of coal, so that had the Commission recommended this method of restoring the foreign market they would at a stroke have shown the way to expand the home market as well. It would have affected both. A million pounds worth of metal goods shipped to Russia would have set dozens of furnaces in blast, started rolling mills and opened the gates of engineering works now closed; while into the maws of these blast furnaces there could

have been poured anything from 12,000,000 to 16,000,000 tons of coal, that is to say some three or four times the pre-war export of crude coal to Russia. But in order to make these recommendations the Commission would have had to recommend long credits, or propose a £100,000,000 loan. In so doing, they would in as many words have been setting the seal of their approval on the economic policy (as regards Russian trade) of the Labour Government of 1924, and disapproving of the economic policy of the Government by which they had been set up as a Commission. The Commissioners, therefore, were discreetly silent. The British Economic Foreign Policy and Foreign Policy in general were treated again as being of the same order as the geological formations.

Further, in the very centre of this artificial picture one thing stood out with dazzling clearness and bright hard outlines. The surrounding details were more sketchy, some of them vague, but the apparent necessity of a reduction in wages was firmly and clearly drawn.

From the moment the report appeared this artificial picture was treated as a true representation of the facts. Indeed, to everyone who spoke " of the hard facts of the Coal Industry " there was presented a definite picture conjured up by the skilful brush of the Coal Commission.

Galtonians tell us that the visualising of words usually begins in childhood with some vivid and arresting impression. The crisis of 1925 had aroused the interest and sensitised the nerves of the people of Britain. It was at this moment that there was imprinted on the retina of the British public the visualisation of the Coal Industry as portrayed in the Coal Commission report.

For years to come economists may patiently de-

molish the false assumptions lying behind the carefully written report of the Coal Commission; they may investigate its assumptions and show how unsubstantial its conclusions were. It does not matter. For years to come the Coal Commission report will be accepted as a bible of facts about the Coal Industry. When, eventually, it is found out, the problems for which it is a false solution will have passed away. It was well designed to serve a particular purpose.

What was that purpose? It can be narrowed down to one thing. The parties to the report wished to divide the Labour movement, to convince those who were ready to be convinced, as well as those who were less ready, that the miners should suffer a reduction in wages and that the other Trade Unions would not be justified in repeating their action of the previous July. In its purpose of weakening the Trade Union morale the report was completely successful. Had it not been for the reserve strategy which began with the coal owners' new proposals of the latter part of March, the history of the Coal Industry would have concluded its 1926 chapter with the Trade Unions accepting the Royal Commission report and refusing to back the miners in their resistance to reduction in wages.

DOCUMENTS

D.27.

ROYAL WARRANT.

GEORGE R.I.

George the Fifth, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas King, Defender of the Faith, to

Our Right Trusty and Well-beloved Counsellor Sir Herbert Louis Samuel, Knight Grand Cross of Our Most Excellent Order of the British Empire; and

Our Trusty and Well-beloved:

Sir Herbert Alexander Lawrence (commonly called the Honourable Sir Herbert Alexander Lawrence), Knight Commander of

Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath, General (retired) of Our Land Forces;

Sir William Henry Beveridge, Knight Commander of Our Most Honourable Order of the Bath; and

Kenneth Lee, Esquire: Greeting!

Whereas We have deemed it expedient that a Commission should forthwith issue to inquire into and report upon the economic position of the Coal Industry and the conditions affecting it and to make any recommendations for the improvement thereof;

Now know ye, that We, reposing great trust and confidence in your knowledge and ability, have authorised and appointed, and do by these Presents authorise and appoint you, the said Sir Herbert Louis Samuel (Chairman), Sir Herbert Alexander Lawrence (commonly called the Honourable Sir Herbert Alexander Lawrence), Sir William Henry Beveridge and Kenneth Lee to be Our Commissioners for the purposes of the said inquiry:

And for the better effecting the purposes of this Our Commission, We do by these Presents give and grant unto you, or any three or more of you, full power to call before you such persons as you shall judge likely to afford you any information upon the subject of this Our Commission; to call for information in writing and also to call for, have access to and examine all such books, documents, registers and records as may afford you the fullest information on the subject, and to inquire of and concerning the premises by all other lawful ways and means whatsoever:

And We do by these Presents authorise and empower you, or any one or more of you, to visit and personally inspect such places as you may deem it expedient so to inspect for the more effectual carrying out of the purposes aforesaid:

And We do by these Presents will and ordain that this Our Commission shall continue in full force and virtue, and that you, Our said Commissioners, or any three or more of you, may from time to time proceed in the execution thereof, and of every matter and thing therein contained, although the same be not continued from time to time by adjournment:

And We do further ordain that you, or any three or more of you, have liberty to report your proceedings under this Our Commission from time to time, if you shall judge it expedient so to do:

And Our further will and pleasure is that you do with as little delay as possible, report to Us under your hands and seals, or under the hands and seals of any three or more of you, your opinion upon the matter herein submitted for your consideration.

Given at Our Court at *Balmoral*, the *fifth* day of *September*, one thousand nine hundred and twenty-five, in the sixteenth year of Our Reign.

By His Majesty's Command,

W. Joynson-Hicks.

Royal Commission on the Coal Industry (1925).

APPENDIX D.28.

ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE COAL INDUSTRY (1925).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

THE coal-mining industry, for more than a century the foundation of the economic strength of the country, has come upon difficult times. This change of fortunes is the result of powerful economic forces. It is idle to attribute it either on the one hand to political unrest or restriction of output among the miners, or, on the other hand, to inefficiency in the day by day management of the mines.

At the same time we cannot agree with the view presented to us by the mine-owners that little can be done to improve the organisation of the industry, and that the only practicable course is to lengthen hours and to lower wages. In our view large changes are necessary in other directions, and large progress is possible. We agree that immediate measures are indispensable to deal with the immediate position, but the effort ought not to stop there.

The problem indeed is two-fold. It has a permanent aspect and a temporary aspect. We have proposals to make with regard to each. We will take first the permanent aspect.

The Need for Changes.

The industry is marked by great diversities. Among the existing collieries many date from an earlier time, and according to modern standards are badly planned. The defects are the result partly of the age of our coalfields, partly of the private and divided ownership of the minerals, with its effects on the layout of the mines, partly of other causes. Very many of the collieries are on too small a scale to be good units of production. A number are defective in equipment and some in management. On the other hand there are a large number of collieries which are admirably planned, equipped and managed.

The methods of utilising coal are unscientific. Four-fifths of the coal consumed in the country is burnt in a raw state; oil and valuable by-products are wasted and the atmosphere is polluted.

Research into the methods both of winning and of using coal is inadequate.

Mining, in many places, should be intimately associated with several other industries—with gas, electricity, smokeless fuel, oil, chemical products, blast furnaces, and coke ovens. A beginning has been made towards this combination, but it is no more than a beginning.

The selling organisation and the methods of transport are too costly, and do not secure the best financial results for the collieries, and therefore for the miners employed in them.

While the relations of employers and employed are generally better than sometimes appears on the surface, the organisation of the industry on its labour side calls for many improvements.

The Proposal for Nationalisation.

As a remedy for these defects the Miners' Federation propose the nationalisation of the mines. We do not recommend the adoption of this policy, for reasons which have been fully stated in this Report.

We are not satisfied that the scheme proposed to us is workable, or that it offers a clear social gain. We perceive in it grave economic dangers, and we find no advantages that cannot be obtained as readily, or more readily, in other ways.

We contemplate accordingly the continuance of the industry under private enterprise, but we make a number of proposals for its re-organisation.

Recommendations on Re-organisation.

1. Ownership of the Mineral.—The error which was made in times past, in allowing the ownership of the coal to fall into private hands, should be retrieved. The mineral should be acquired by the State—by purchase where it has a market value, by a declaration of State ownership in the case of unproved coal or coal at deep levels, which has now no market value. The coal of existing mines which are likely soon to cease working, and coal which is now worked and is not likely to be developed in the future, should be excluded from the purchase. Safeguards should be adopted against excessive compensation claims. A Coal Commission should be appointed, under the authority of the Secretary for Mines, to acquire and adminster the mineral property.

2. Amalgamations of existing Mines.—The amalgamation of many of the present small units of production is both desirable and practicable. This may often be effected from within, but in many cases it will only take place if outside assistance is given. Any general measure of compulsory amalgamation, on arbitrary lines, would be mischievous; the action to be taken should be elastic and should enable each case to be treated individually. The State as mineral owner will be able to promote desirable amalgamations when granting new leases or renewing old ones. Legislation should provide for a compulsory transfer of interests under existing leases where desirable amalgamations are prevented by the dissent of some of the parties or their unreasonable claims. Existing leases would not otherwise be affected.

3. Combination of Industries.—A closer connection of mining with the allied industries should be promoted. Highly technical questions are involved, affecting a number of industries, and not electricity alone. The development of electrical supply under the new proposals of the Government should be closely co-ordinated with the generation of electricity at the mines. The heat, power and light requirements of the country should be under the constant and comprehensive survey of a body formed for the purpose. We propose for consideration the establishment of a National Fuel

and Power Committee, with advisory powers, composed of representatives nominated by the Government from among the official and other bodies concerned.

4. RESEARCH.—The existing provision for research should be largely extended by the industry with the support of the State. It is urgently necessary that new methods for winning and utilising coal should be sought for, and should be found, if the prosperity of the industry is to be restored and a proper standard of wages and working conditions assured to the workers. If processes of low temperature carbonisation were perfected, great national advantages would ensue, particularly through the production of a smokeless fuel for domestic and industrial use, and the provision of large supplies of mineral oil from the country's own resources. The State should give financial support to the further experiments, on a commercial scale, which are necessary.

5. DISTRIBUTION.—The industry, as a whole, has so far failed to realise the benefits to be obtained by a readiness to co operate. Large financial advantages might be gained by the formation, in particular, of co-operative selling agencies. They are specially needed in the export trade.

The Government should consider the establishment of an official system for the sampling and analysis of coal, with a view to encouraging selling on specification and guarantee, in both the home and the foreign markets.

Local authorities should be empowered to engage in the retail sale of coal.

We propose measures to secure the adoption of larger mineral wagons on the railways, and a greater concentration of ownership of wagons. A Standing Joint Committee of the Ministry of Transport and the Mines Department should be formed to promote these measures.

6. LABOUR.—The relations between employers and employed are of fundamental importance, and here also we are convinced that a number of changes are necessary.

(1) The principle on which the recent wage agreements have been based is, in our opinion, sound, but amendments are needed in the methods of ascertaining the proceeds of the industry for the fixing of wages. A large proportion of the coal is sold by the mines to associated industries, and the most important of these amendments relates to the prices at which these transfers are made.

(2) The standard length of the working day, which is now on the average 7½ hours underground, should remain unaltered. The optional re-distribution of hours within the present weekly total, over a week of five days instead of six, should be considered. The multiple shift system should be extended.

(3) Joint pit committees should be established generally.

(4) The methods of payment of men not employed at the face should be revised where possible so as to give them a direct interest in output.

(5) The introduction of a family allowance system, either nationally or by districts, is desirable. Pooling schemes should be adopted to prevent married men with families being prejudiced in obtaining employment.

(6) Profit-sharing schemes, providing for the distribution to the workmen of shares in the undertakings, should be generally adopted in the industry, and should be made obligatory by statute.

(7) For all new collieries, a proper provision of houses for the workers should be a condition of the lease.

(8) The general establishment of pit-head baths is necessary. This should be undertaken by the existing Miners' Welfare Fund, which should be increased by a substantial contribution from royalties.

(9) When prosperity returns to the industry, we consider that annual holidays with pay should be established.

The Immediate Problem.

To bring any of these measures of re-organisation into effect must need a period of months ; to bring all of them into full operation must need years. The Miners' Federation fully recognise that, even if nationalisation were to be accepted, much time must elapse before the great changes it involves could be put into force and the effects be seen. Meantime, the hard economic conditions of the moment remain to be faced.

The dominant fact is that, in the last quarter of 1925, if the subsidy be excluded, 73 per cent. of the coal was produced at a loss.

We express no opinion whether the grant of a subsidy last July was unavoidable or not, but we think its continuance indefensible. The subsidy should stop at the end of its authorised term, and should never be repeated.

We cannot approve the proposal of the Mining Association, that the gap between costs and proceeds should be bridged by an increase of an hour in the working day, reductions in the miners' wages, some economies in other costs, and a large diminution in railway rates, to be effected by lowering the wages of railwaymen. In any case, these proposals go beyond the need, for we do not concur in the low estimate of future coal prices on which they are based.

While the mine-owners presented a plan which is unacceptable, the Miners' Federation abstained from making any suggestion as to the means for meeting the immediate situation. The duty therefore devolves upon the Commission to formulate its own proposals.

If the present hours are to be retained, we think a revision of the " minimum percentage addition to standard rates of wages," fixed in 1924 at a time of temporary prosperity, is indispensable. A disaster is impending over the industry, and the immediate reduction of working costs that can be effected in this way, and in this way alone, is essential to save it. The minimum percentage is not a " minimum wage " in the usual sense of that term. The wages of the lowest paid men will be safeguarded by a continuance

of the system of subsistence allowances. The reductions that we contemplate will still leave the mine-owners without adequate profits in any of the wage-agreement districts, and without any profits in most districts. If trade improves and prices rise, a profit will be earned. If prices do not rise, an adequate profit must be sought in the improved methods which should in any case be adopted.

Should the miners freely prefer some extension of hours with a less reduction of wages, Parliament would no doubt be prepared to authorise it. We trust, however, that this will not occur.

We consider that it is essential that there should be, as there always has been hitherto, considerable variation in the rates of wages in the several districts. But we are strongly of opinion that national wage agreements should continue. Such agreements are entered into in all the other British industries of importance.

We recommend that the representatives of the employers and employed should meet together, first nationally and then in the districts, in order to arrive at a settlement by the procedure that we have previously suggested.

By a revision of the minimum percentage coal mining would be saved from an immediate collapse, but it seems inevitable that a number of collieries would still have to be closed. This may give rise to the necessity for a transfer of labour on a considerable scale. We recommend that the Government should be prepared in advance with such plans to assist it as are practicable, and should provide funds for the purpose.

Conclusion.

In the summer of last year the nation was oppressed by a grave anxiety. Having emerged from the mental stress and the economic strain of an unprecedented war, aware of the imperative need of recuperating its strength, it found itself faced by the possibility of an industrial conflict, or a series of conflicts, on a scale equally unprecedented, perhaps, in extent and in duration. And the issues that were at stake were wider even than the limits of the nation; for the stability and the prosperity of Great Britain have a profound influence both upon the opinion and upon the interests of Europe, and of the world at large. If there were here a period of confusion and conflict, of instability and retrogression, the effects would be felt in a widening circle everywhere else.

This Commission was appointed to investigate the causes of the trouble and to endeavour to suggest a remedy. We have discharged our onerous duty to the best of our ability. There is no part of this wide field which we have not sought to examine. We have suggested a series of definite constructive proposals.

The way to prosperity for the mining industry lies along three chief lines of advance; through greater application of science to the winning and using of coal, through larger units for production and distribution, through fuller partnership between employers and employed. In all three respects progress must come mainly from

within the industry. The State can help materially—by substantial payments in aid of research; by removing obstacles to amalgamation under existing leases; as owner of the minerals by determining the conditions of new leases; by legislation for the establishment of pit committees and of profit-sharing, and in other ways.

The future depends primarily upon the leadership, and the general level of opinion, among the mine-owners and the miners of Great Britain. In laying down our charge, we would express our own firm conviction, that if the present difficulties be wisely handled, if the grievances of the one side and of the other be remedied, and a better spirit prevail in consequence between them, the mining industry, with the aid of science, will certainly recover, and even surpass, its former prosperity. It will again become a source of great economic strength to the nation.

All which we humbly submit for Your Majesty's gracious consideration.

HERBERT SAMUEL (*Chairman*).
H. A. LAWRENCE.
W. H. BEVERIDGE.
KENNETH LEE.

C. S. HURST (*Secretary*).
F. S. STARLING (*Assistant Secretary*).

6th March, 1926.

Chapter VIII

PREPAREDNESS AND SOLIDARITY

The relations between the General Council, the Miners' Federation, and other bodies—mainly after Christmas.

It will be remembered that one of the decisions of the General Council, agreed to subsequently by the Scarborough Trade Union Congress, was that the Industrial Committee, which had been set up to manage the business of July, 1925, should remain in being. This special Industrial Committee, as re-appointed with slight but significant alterations after the Scarborough Congress, consisted of :—

Arthur Pugh (*Chairman*).
J. Bromley, M.P.
A. Hayday, M.P.
George Hicks.
A. B. Swales.
J. H. Thomas, M.P.
Ben Tillett.
A. G. Walkden.
W. M. Citrine (*Acting Secretary*).

It will be noted that Mr. Pugh was now added, taking Mr. Swales' position as Chairman. Mr. Swales remained a member in place of Mr. Poulton, and Mr. Thomas took the place of Mr. Marchbank.

This Committee had been charged with the duty of remaining in contact with the situation and taking such steps as might appear necessary. Up till Christmas, and for a month afterwards, it did not appear necessary to them to take any decisive steps. Meantime the nationalisation evidence of the Miners'

Federation, jointly with the two National Bodies, had been submitted and very coolly received. Accordingly on 15th January, it was decided by the Miners' Executive to ask for a joint meeting with the Special Industrial Committee. The invitation was accepted. From this time onwards a number of pronouncements were made giving the attitude of the General Council towards the dispute. These pronouncements are of considerable importance for a variety of reasons. In the first place they showed that this attitude, so strongly set forth in the earliest pronouncements, was gradually whittled down as the weeks passed by. Secondly, they are of importance because it was according to the way they interpreted these successive pronouncements that the workers on the one hand and the Government on the other hand, were inclined to take their cue as to what part was likely to be played by the General Council in the Miners' dispute. Thirdly, they are of importance because in the controversy that arose after the General Strike was ended, much stress was laid by the controversialists on the precise meaning of these various pronouncements. Each sought to justify the line taken in the first fortnight of May, by a reference to these earlier pronouncements, while at the same time the imputation was cast upon the other part to the controversy, that they had acted in a manner inconsistent with the earlier declarations. The course of comments and declarations was as follows :—

On the 12th February, Mr. Herbert Smith, the President of the Miners' Federation, made a statement to the Industrial Committee in which he laid down the most important principles for which the Miners' Federation would contend—

(1) The maintenance of wages at the present level.
(2) The maintenance of the present working day.

(3) The maintenance of the present system of National Agreements.

The Miners' Executive then appointed nine members, including their officials, to consult with the nine members of the Industrial Committee. On the 19th February, a further Joint Meeting of nine from each side, the Industrial Committee representing the General Council, and an equivalent number from the Miners' Federation, was held.

The following Official Statement was issued at the close of the Meeting :—

D.29.

" The two Committees gave full consideration to the possibility of a crisis arising in connection with the Mining situation. From the Trade Union point of view the question is entirely one of wages and conditions of employment in the coal-fields.

The circumstances which led the Trade Union Movement, last July, to pledge the united support of the miners will constitute, in the opinion of the Joint Meeting, a menace to the miners' standard of life. The Committees particularly desire to urge the Trade Union Movement not to allow itself to be influenced by unauthorised and unofficial suggestions which are being made in many quarters regarding the Mining problem.

The attitude of the Trade Union Movement was made perfectly clear last July, namely, that it would stand firmly and unitedly against any attempt further to degrade the standard of life in the coal fields. There was to be no reduction in wages, no increase in working hours, and no interference with the principle of National Agreements. *This is the position of the Trade Union Movement to-day.*

The two Committees are to await the report of the Coal Commission and will meet again jointly, specially to consider the report as soon as it is available.

The communication embodying these decisions is being sent to all the affiliated Trade Unions."

On Friday, February 26th, this declaration just

cited was confirmed in a statement which made no change in the policy. Therefore this declaration of February 19th, reiterated on the 26th, represented the situation prior to the declaration of the Coal Commission report.

It will be clear from what has already been stated in Chapter VII. that a peculiar atmosphere had been created round about the report of the Coal Commission, an atmosphere almost of religious reverence, of worshipfulness; an air that was extremely enervating to Trade Union leaders susceptible to that kind of influence. Some of this atmosphere was communicated to the Miners' representatives.

On the 11th March, the day after the report was issued, the miners not only accepted the proposal of the Prime Minister, that the parties in the Coal Industry should make no pronouncement until after full examination of the report, but they also requested the Industrial Committee to take a similar line. The actual statement of the Joint Meeting of the Industrial Committee was as follows :—

D.30.

"In view of the fact that the Miners' Federation is consulting its members, and examining thoroughly the report of the proposals therein, at the miners' request, the Meeting unanimously decided that in the best interests of all parties, adequate time should be given to all concerned before coming to any decision."

During the same week Mr. Cook had advised all miners and miners' wives to read the coal report; while the Miners' Conference of May 12th dispersed to the districts without any pronouncement, but also without altering the *status quo* mandate of the previous July.

On the 25th of March a further Joint Meeting was held, and the decision of the Government as communicated by the Prime Minister, to accept the report, provided all other members did also, and to give

financial assistance for a period of, say, three months, was reported.

In the meantime this proposal had to be discussed by the Miners' Federation Conference, which had been called for the 9th April. Before that Conference could meet an endeavour was made by the leaders of the Miners' Federation to induce the Industrial Committee to take up a definite stand. Paragraphs had appeared in the press. Speeches had been made, an atmosphere had been diffused, everything had been done to suggest that the report of the Coal Commission had caused a complete change of view on the part of the General Council. It was openly said that they no longer supported the miners. It seemed necessary, therefore, to get a reaffirmation of the declaration of February 19th. Would the General Council continue to stand by the three fundamental points to which they were already committed? The miners then approached the Industrial Committee. After full discussion the Industrial Committee composed the following resolution :—

D.31.

" That having discussed with the representatives of the Miners' Federation the present position in the Mining Industry, with special reference to the views of the miners on the Coalowners' statements of their attitude in regard to the Report of the Coal Commission, this Committee re-confirms its previous declarations in support of the miners' efforts to obtain an equitable settlement of outstanding difficulties.

" This Committee is of opinion that negotiations between the Mining Association and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain should be continued without delay, in order to obtain a clear understanding with regard to the report of the Coal Commission, and to reduce points of difference to the smallest possible dimensions.

"That this Committee holds itself available to assist in any way possible to reach a satisfactory settlement."

This resolution was followed up by a letter in which the policy was declared. The letter runs as follows :—

D.32.

"*8th April*, 1926.

Dear Mr. Cook,

The Industrial Committee of the General Council have carefully considered the statements placed before them by your representatives at their meeting to-day, during which you asked for a declaration from the Committee as to the support they would accord to your Federation in respect of any attempts by the Coalowners to enforce—

(*a*) A reversion to District Agreements ;
(*b*) A lengthening of Hours ;
(*c*) A Reduction in Wages.

The Committee fully realise the seriousness of the present position, but they are of the opinion that matters have not yet reached the stage when any final declaration of the General Council's policy can be made.

It appears to them that negotiations are yet in a very early stage, and that efforts should be made to explore to the fullest extent the possibility of reducing the points of difference between your Federation and the Coalowners, and for that purpose they advise the immediate continuance of negotiations as suggested in the accompanying Resolution.

It would be an advantage to the Committee if you could furnish them, after your conference to-morrow, with a detailed statement of the views of your Federation in respect of the various recommendations put forward by the Commission.

The Committee wish to assure you that they are extremely desirous of doing anything they possibly can to facilitate settlement, and they will hold themselves in

readiness in case your Federation should desire to utilise their services.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) WALTER M. CITRINE,
Acting Secretary."

It will be clear that this letter, even more than the resolution, showed a tendency, particularly in the second paragraph, towards weakening on the part of the General Council's Sub-Committee. The change of view was ominous. It was not the resolution the miners had hoped for. Indeed it is difficult not to read into the letter from Mr. Citrine a slight yearning for a modification on the part of the Miners' Conference, of the stand hitherto taken. Here then, just discernible, was the rift in the lute.

The days before Christmas had seen the attempt on the part of the miners to prepare a plan, and it also witnessed the defeat of that particular proposal. After Christmas, with a view to ensuring the close co-operation with their fellow Trade Unions, the Miners had submerged their own views in the evidence they presented before the Coal Commission, jointly with the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party. From this concession they had moved on to the joint meetings with the Industrial Committee, in which at first it had appeared as though the co-operation and full support of the previous July would be completely assured. If words meant anything, that was how the matter stood. Now it appeared that the words of the Coal Report were to make a change in the position. There were already signs of yielding. What were the miners to do? Were they also to yield or were they to stand by the policy that had stood them, and their wives and children, in such good stead since the summer of 1924? The attitude of the leaders of the Trade Unions was perfectly clear. It was definitely

an attitude of yielding. What if the miners stood stiff, to whom could they look for an equally stiff and firm support? Clearly there was but one resource, That was the working-class itself.

Now any such hope, based on the expected working-class solidarity, must take into account the mood and the outlook of the mass of workers. This is not by any means equivalent to the representation of their mood by the Trade Union officials. The Trade Union officials' views may coincide with the mood of the masses or it may lie behind. In some cases it may at times go ahead. It should be remembered that Trade Unions are not all of them fighting organisations, and are none of them fighting organisations all the time. There are many other duties to be performed by Trade Union leaders besides that of leading their men in a dispute. Consequently a Trade Union official may be elected because of qualities and for purposes quite other than those that emerge in a strike or a lockout. Such a leader in time of trouble may be a very imperfect indicator of the mood of his members. Again, the Trade Union leader has, in practice, a life tenure. As years pass by, as he becomes more and more remote from the daily working life of those whom he represents, so he may, all his official life, be moving further and further from a real understanding or a true representation of the mood of his members on the larger issue of Trade Unionism regarded as part of a class struggle; at the very same time as he is becoming more and more practised and skilled in the absorbing details and special intricacies of Trade Unionism regraded as a system of friendly benefits and a complex of working rules.

To such a man, clearly, the new conditions and hardships confronting the Trade Unionists of Britain

and dazzling them, like glaring headlights, would present but a feeble glimmer.

Now while everyone may readily grant the truth of this proposition, it may at once be said—granted the imperfection of the Trade Union bureaucracy as a register of the opinions of the masses of Trade Unionists—how otherwise can you ascertain from these inarticulate masses their real opinions and desires? This was the question the miners had to answer. This was the decision they had to take, that if they were certain that the mood of the working masses was not in accordance with what their fellow Trade Union officials opined that it was, they must then stand to their guns, knowing that the masses were with them and confident that mass opinion would swing round the Trade Union officials in their support. What evidence was there of the mood of the masses? In the first place, each delegate coming to that Miners' Conference of the 9th April was in greater or less degree able to report on what evidence he had, by personal contact or hearsay, of the attitude of the railway men, transport workers, etc., in his own village or locality. Secondly, there was the response already ascertained from the Minority Movement.

The Minority Movement was a Movement which had sprung up in the previous two years. Its Secretary was Harry Pollitt, who for some four years past had been a prominent speaker in the Trade Union Congress and a leader therein of Left Wing opinion. During his secretaryship some four conferences had been held, at nearly half-yearly intervals. Each six months showed a remarkable increase in the number of those who supported the platform and outlook of the Minority Movement. It was frowned upon by the official expression of the Labour Movement; branches which affiliated to it were reprimanded, and

in certain cases Unions went so far as to instruct their branches to withdraw from Trade Councils which had affiliated to the Minority Movement. In the face of this official displeasure it may therefore be reckoned that the measure of support accorded to the Minority Movement represents only a percentage of its total support.

Now on Saturday, March 20th, a conference of this Minority Movement was held. It was presided over by Tom Mann, who for many years had been a leader and foremost voice in movements of revolt. He spoke to an audience which consisted of 883 delegates, representing no less than 957,000 Trade Unionists. The significance of this figure becomes clearer still when it is remembered that it amounts to nearly a quarter of the number of Trade Unions affiliated to the Trade Union Congress. Clearly, if the Minority Movement affiliations were any test, then the Miners could rely on the mood of the masses, and regard the Trade Union Officials as being less advanced than their members.

It was in the August of the previous year that the Minority Movement Conference had first declared for preparedness.

Details of the March Conference of Action are given in the Appendix to this chapter.

It was clear from this Conference of Action that the miners could rely on the mood of the masses, and that there was a readiness both to understand and to act to a degree that had not been previously known in the British working-class. It was in these conditions and amid this atmosphere that the miners' policy conference of April 9th cast the die for resistence to their standards of living. The resolution was as follows :—

D.33.

"That this Conference, having considered the Report of the Royal Commission and the proposals of the coal-owners thereon, recommends the districts as follows—

(*a*) That no assent be given to any proposal for increasing the length of the working day;

(*b*) That the principle of a national wage agreement with a national minimum percentage be firmly adhered to;

(*c*) That inasmuch as wages are already too low, we cannot assent to any proposals for reducing wages.

These recommendations to be remitted to the districts for their immediate consideration and decision, after which a further Delegate Conference be called as speedily as possible for the purpose of arriving at a final decision."

The Miners had decided to fight regardless of the atmosphere of yielding that was already obvious in the communications from the General Council. They could not but feel the responsive atmosphere of the workers in pit, factory, station, garage, etc., and where the masses were thus ready a sure instinct told them that the trade union leaders would be compelled to follow.

DOCUMENT

D.34.

THE MINORITY CONFERENCE OF ACTION.

In his Chairman's Address at the August, 1925, Conference of the Minority Movement, Tom Mann, referring to the month-old Red Friday, had raised the question of preparedness in a significant passage:—

"In the struggle with the mineowners and the miners it is something to be glad of that the miners, backed by trade union solidarity, successfully held up the owners; although this has secured nothing for the miners we are entitled to be proud of, because it gave evidence of class solidarity of a kind that only needs to be extended properly to secure much greater results; still we have to ask ourselves—

Are we prepared to meet the opposing forces when the next round begins? We must be frank about it and admit that at present we are not ready. The engineers feel keenly the absence of fully disciplined forces capable of national and international action, and the miners will require a much more highly disciplined regimentation of the organised forces of the workers when the next battle begins. **For this we ought to really prepare, and that without delay. I feel confident, I may say, without a moment's hesitancy,** that all present at this Conference are fully determined **to be prepared.**"

At the Scarborough Trades Union Congress, in the quarrel between Lefts and Rights, the lead in the debate was taken by the Minority Movement representatives. In the spring of 1926, when eight months of the subsidy period had nearly run, and there was yet no evidence of preparations undertaken by the General Council, the Minority Movement called a Special Conference of Action. The Conference met a week after the issue of the Coal Commission Report, and at a moment when all discussion of this Report was officially hushed—during a national "interval for perusal." Again the Chairman of the Conference very accurately diagnosed the substance of the Report :—

"The policy of splitting the workers is very cunningly continued. The Commission has recommended some changes, aimed at splitting the Labour Movement, such as the family wage, municipal selling agencies, and the nationalisation of minerals. They hope the reformist elements in the Labour Movement will concur with their recommendations and lose sight of the attacks upon living standards contained in the Report—which the trade unions must fight."

At the same time, on the motion of Arthur Horner, of the South Wales Miners' Federation, a resolution was carried on the capitalist offensive :—

"The preparations for the capitalist offensive assume ever larger dimensions. The present industrial position is full of menace and the attack threatens to be the most colossal in the history of the working-class movement.

Ever since the temporary check given to the capitalist offensive at the end of last July by the united action of the Trade Union movement, under the leadership of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the capitalist class has missed no opportunity to renew the attack.

They have made separate attacks upon the seamen, miners, railwaymen, building workers, textile workers, engineers and many other important sections, in order to divide and conquer them sectionally.

The engineering crisis, the findings of the Coal Commission, the Government support of the employers' attack upon the Fair Wage Clause, as applicable to building workers, all lead up to a general capitalist attack in mass.

Just as last July, so to-day, it is imperative that all the forces of the working-class movement should be mobilised under one central leadership to repel the attack and to secure the demands of every section of the workers.

Once again the General Council must take the lead; once again the entire movement must be gathered together for the fight.

This Conference of Action therefore calls upon all supporters of the Minority Movement and the workers generally to—

(1) Urge each Trades Council to constitute itself a Council of Action by mobilising all the forces of the working-class movement in its locality—the Trade Union branches, the Organised Unemployed, the Co-operative Guilds, and the Workers' Political Organisations; by organising 100 per cent. trade unionism; special attention to be paid to the organisation of young workers, and a campaign to be commenced to organise the unorganised women workers; building up workshop organisation; by calling special conferences of affiliated members; by holding continuous mass demonstrations in support of the sections attacked; by bringing pressure to bear on the local authorities to secure relief for those rendered destitute during the struggles; by establishing as far as means permit a commissariat department in conjunction with the local co-operatives; by using every means to bring all the workers, men and women, organised and unorganised, into the struggle.

(2) Urge the General Council immediately to convene a National Congress of Action, at which plans shall be prepared for—

(*a*) The complete scientific utilisation of the whole Trade Union Movement in the struggle;

(*b*) Securing the co-operation of the Co-operative Organisations;

(*c*) Securing the active participation of the Parliamentary and National Labour Parties in the organisation of the struggle by placing themselves at the disposal of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress;

(*d*) Urging the General Council of the Trades Union Congress to take steps to ensure the full support of the Interna-

tional Trade Union Movement for the struggle of the British working-class.

Another resolution on Defence and Maintenance of Trade Union Rights was moved by Alex. Gossip, of the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association. This Resolution dealt first with the Government and Fascist aggression, the recent attacks on the anthracite miners, batoned and bludgeoned by the police whilst engaged in peaceful picketing ; the imprisonment of sixty of their number with varying sentences ; the imprisonment of the twelve Communist leaders, whose only crime was the advocacy of working-class principles against capitalist attacks. " These attacks," the resolution went on to say, " prove the growing unity of the workers, and the Government is compelled to drop the hypocritical mask of democracy." It referred to the projected legislation against the political levy ; the threats of the F.B.I., and in direct contrast the free scope given to the O.M.S. (supported by the State apparatus then being got into readiness for E.P.A. to Fascist organisations and a Special Constabulary) ; the measures instituted to " set the uniformed workers in the Army and Navy against the organised workers in the Trade Unions," and, finally, the Resolution demanded and pledged itself to enforce the right :—

(*a*) To organise the workers on the job into factory and pit committees ; the workshop committees ultimately to become the organisational unit of the industrial organisation, under the auspices of the Trades Councils ; and to set up Trades Councils where none now exist.

(*b*) To form (through and under the supervision of the Trades Councils) Workers' Defence Corps, in order to protect working-class speakers from bourgeois terrorism, to protect the Trade Union headquarters from Fascist incendiarism, to protect strike pickets against police interference, and finally, build up a powerful working-class force, capable of defending the political and industrial rights and liberties of the workers.

(*c*) To demand the repeal of " Sedition " and anti-Labour laws.

(*d*) To resist strenuously any attempts by local authorities either voluntary or at the instigation of the Government to prevent free association and public expression.

(*e*) To demand the right of soldiers and naval ratings to refuse strike services.

The next week a Conference of Minority Movement Groups from the various coalfields met and passed the following resolution :—

D.35.

" This Conference of militant miners from every coalfield in Britain, resolves to work vigorously and perseveringly for the full and complete rejection of the Royal Coal Commission Report. We recognise the Report to be a subtle manoeuvre on the part of the British Capitalism to be relieved of the subsidy to the mining industry, through the lowering of wages and working conditions of the miners, which it hopes to achieve in consequence of the pseudo-socialistic bait embodied in the Report which is intended to divide the miners into factions for and against the Report.

" We, therefore, call upon the miners to concentrate upon securing 100 per cent. organisation and to prepare to fight for the **guaranteed Weekly Minimum Wage, commensurate with the increased cost of living**, whilst recognising that the necessary reorganisation, so far as to permit this, is only possible by the nationalisation of the mining industry without compensation, and with workers' control.

Chapter IX

THE LAST THREE WEEKS OF APRIL

From the day when the Miners' Federation passed the resolution in which it adhered to the policy jointly accepted by the Miners' Federation and by the Trades Union Congress Special Industrial Committee in February, events moved with unhurrying speed towards a conflict. Any examination of these events, as they were recorded day by day, makes it appear now that there was little likelihood of any issue being found other than the one which eventually took place. An air of inevitability hangs over the chain of events.

This, however, was not at all apparent at the time. Indeed the contemporary atmosphere was exactly the opposite. Everyone was persuaded by the press, by speeches, or by their own reluctance to face the issue, that there was *bound to be a settlement.* It was in this happy-go-lucky atmosphere generated by the press that the miners' lockout was approached.

The record of events for the ten days preceding the last week of April are best given in the actual words of the chairman of the Trades Union Congress General Council (Mr. Arthur Pugh, J.P.) in his statement to the Conference on Thursday, April 29th :—

D.36.

"A meeting took place between the Miners' Executive and the Central Committee of the Mining Association on April 13th, at which the deadlock, which had been apparent from the beginning, was openly declared, the owners announcing their intention to proceed at once in the various districts to invite the miners' representatives to meet them for the purpose of considering the amounts of the minimum

percentages or basis rates and of subsistence wages. The Special Industrial Committee on April 14th learned from the miners' representatives of this position of affairs, and stated its views in the following resolution :—

> This Committee protests against the action of the mineowners in abandoning national negotiations and in attempting to open negotiations with the districts. This, in the opinion of the Committee, is calculated to create ill-feeling and suspicion at a critical time, and is a course of action contrary to the spirit of conciliation and the expressed views of the Royal Commission, and prejudicial to the prospect of an amicable settlement.
>
> "The Committee reiterates its previous declaration to render the miners the fullest support in resisting the degradation of their standard of life, and in obtaining an equitable settlement of the case with regard to wages, hours, and national agreements.

"The Committee sought an opportunity to lay this resolution before the Prime Minister, and, as a result of our conversation with him, Mr. Baldwin invited the Miners' Executive to meet him on the following day. The result of that meeting was an understanding that the Prime Minister would endeavour to bring the mineowners to agree to resume negotiations on a national basis.

"Meanwhile the owners in the several districts posted notices to terminate contracts on April 30th, and later announced the terms on which the pits would be open for work as from May 1st.

"I need not state these terms in detail ; they are of such a nature that the owners' chairman himself (Mr. Evan Williams) was constrained to describe them as a miserable wage. It is clearly impossible to regard them as a basis of negotiations, either nationally or in the districts, and it may be stated that they have not been seriously discussed in the subsequent negotiations.

"When, on April 22nd, the two parties came together at the instance of the Prime Minister, it became apparent that the deadlock continued. The owners produced a draft national agreement embodying the general principles for the regulation of wages upon which they proposed to proceed ; but they definitely refused to discuss with the miners' representatives any minimum percentage to be applied nationally over the coalfields. They also refused

to discuss nationally even the district rates of wages and conditions they had framed, though they did, as a matter of information, supply the miners' leaders with copies of the terms which the District Owners' Associations had prepared.

"Faced with what we could not but regard as a complete deadlock as between the owners and the miners, the Industrial Committee again that same evening, April 22nd, went to the Prime Minister. Our mission then was to urge him to take a firmer control of the issue; to meet both sides, and to bring about a resumption of negotiations under his direction."

The result of this action by the Special Industrial Committee was that Mr. Baldwin met both the miners and the mineowners on the 23rd April, and a Committee of Nine was appointed from each body for the purpose of negotiations, but no positive result had been reached. As Mr. Pugh said in his report, " matters were at a complete standstill." It was at this moment that the Special Industrial Committee appointed Mr. Ramsay Macdonald and Mr. Arthur Henderson to be present at all meetings of the Joint Council dealing with the mining situation.

The miners then decided to summon a Special Delegate Conference for Wednesday 28th, and it was decided also that a Special Conference of Executives of all Trade Unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress should be summoned for Thursday 29th. The events of the early part of the last week of April can again be given in the words of Mr. Pugh :—

D.37.

"On Monday morning, April 26th, the Special Industrial Committee was invited to meet the Prime Minister at Downing Street. The summons was rather unexpected, for it was understood that the miners' representatives were to meet Mr. Baldwin later in the day, and we had arranged to meet them after their interview. But we went to

Downing Street, and received from the Prime Minister two suggestions: (1) That we should endeavour to assist him in clearing the path for a resumption of negotiations, and (2) that we should invite the miners to include representatives of the Committee upon their small negotiating body of nine members in order that we might be fully informed of the course of discussion when joint negotiations were resumed with the owners.

"We had no difficulty in assuring the Prime Minister that we were willing and even anxious to adopt both these suggestions. Throughout the crisis we have held ourselves available for consultation and mediation, both by the miners and the Government. We were naturally ready to do what we could to clarify the issues dividing the two parties. We were also prepared to join the miners' negotiation committee, and had, in fact, discussed that idea at our meeting on the Friday before.

"At our meeting with the Miners' Executive on Monday evening, therefore, we put these two proposals before them, and having obtained agreement that our Committee should attend future negotiations, we informed the Prime Minister and urged that negotiations should be proceeded with without delay.

"On Tuesday last (27th June) our Committee were invited to meet the Prime Minister, when he informed us of the results of a further discussion he had had with the mineowners following the consideration by them of definite views he had placed before them on the previous day. He informed us that the mineowners were not agreed to the presence of a third party in the joint negotiations, but that they had agreed to carry on national negotiations without laying down any prior conditions, and fully to explore the whole position. Subsequently he saw the miners, who expressed their readiness to proceed on the lines indicated, and negotiations were resumed on the same evening and were continued yesterday (Wednesday, 25th April)."

Eventually the Prime Minister undertook to try to secure new proposals from the owners. What were these proposals to be? Hitherto the proposals had

been expressible as drastic cuts in wages and the end of national agreements. Hours of Labour so far had not been attacked, although it was known from the evidence given before the Coal Commission that the owners desired a lengthening of hours, but the Commission had definitely pronounced *against* this lengthening of hours, as well as *for* the continuance of national agreements. Had it been known, a certain indication of what proposals would be begotten between the Prime Minister and the coal-owners could have been obtained from the document issued by the Central Office of the Conservative and Unionist Party. The document was issued on Monday 26th; it ran as follows (italics ours) :—

D.38.

"You will no doubt be fully occupied with the Budget debate. Perhaps you will kindly pass on the enclosed to your Labour Correspondent. The Government are particularly anxious to draw the attention of the public to the serious economic position of the coal industry as disclosed in the statistical table given in the House of Commons last week, showing the percentage of coal which is raised at a loss. *Reference may also usefully be made to the question of hours, upon which it is desirable to concentrate attention rather than upon the reduction of wages.*"

At the moment when this document was issued from the offices of the Party of which he was the leader, Mr. Baldwin was carrying through the role of mediator between the owners and the men.

Chapter X

THE DECLARATION OF THE GENERAL STRIKE

The Special Conference of Executive Committees met on Thursday, April 29th, in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, and did not disperse until the afternoon of Saturday, 1st May. The time of the second day, however, was mainly taken up with repeated adjournments and was a day of waiting. The effective Conference was comprised in the resolution and discussion of Thursday and the decisions and discussions of Saturday. On Thursday the Conference was opened with a statement by the chairman, Mr. Arthur Pugh. The statement contained :—

(1) A broad summary of the position as compared with the position in the previous July.

(2) A recital of events and activities during the period immediately preceding the Conference.

(3) A statement of proposals of the General Council on the Coal question. (Quoted as Appendix).

In the first part of his review there occurred the following significant sentences :—

D.39.

" That was the position last July. The situation to-day is different, because we now have before us the Report of the Royal Commission. . . . . But the Commission's Report is a new factor. . . . The Commission came to the conclusion :

That it would be necessary to ask the mine-workers to agree, not to a permanent lowering of wage standards, but to contemplate a temporary modification in order to

avoid the possible unemployment of hundreds of thousands of men. But the Commission, in making its suggestions for meeting the situation in May, laid down this clear condition :—

" Before any sacrifices are asked from those engaged in the industry, it shall be definitely agreed between them that all practicable means for improving its organisation and increasing its efficiency should be adopted as speedily as the circumstances in each case allow."

Now, clearly, all discussion of the problem should be governed by this condition. From that point negotiations should have started."

It will be seen that there was implicit in this statement some kind of acceptance by the Chairman of the Report of the Royal Commission, including its wage reduction proposals, provided that the Report was carried out properly and not piecemeal. But in the last section of his remarks (embodying the statement of the General Council) there occurred a passage which appeared to conflict with the views implicit in the Chairman's earlier utterances, namely :—

" In our view, the wages and working conditions of mine-workers are already so depressed as to render it imperative to seek for remedies other than a further degradation in their standards of life, or the abrogation of the present standard hours, a course which the Commission declared would not provide a remedy."

A resolution was then moved by the Right Hon. J. H. Thomas, M.P., seconded by Mr. Ernest Bevin, both on behalf of the General Council, spoken to by Mr. A. J. Cook and Mr. W. J. Brown, of the Civil Servants' Clerical Association ; and carried with only two dissentients. The resolution was :—

D.40.

" That this Conference of Executives of Unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress endorses the efforts of the General Council to secure an honourable settlement of the differences in the coal-mining industry.

It further instructs the Industrial Committee of the General Council to continue its efforts, and declares its readiness for the negotiations to continue providing that the impending lockout of the mine-workers is not enforced.

That this Conference hereby adjourns until to-morrow, and agree to remain in London to enable the General Council to consult, report and take instructions."

The resolution was somewhat general in its terms, but when in the subsequent discussion, Mr. A. J. Cook said :—

D.41.

"The resolution, if I understand it aright, means the confirmation of the statement sent out on the 26th February,"

no exception was taken by any of the General Council, or any of the delegates to this interpretation of the meaning ; it appeared to be the way the resolution was understood by those present.

Mr. Thomas, in his speech, chiefly stressed the point of getting the lockout notices withdrawn. Mr. Bevin went further. He said :—

D.42.

"It may be asked why we have not come with some definite plan. I do not want it to be assumed for one moment that the General Council has been idle, but we are not going to begin wielding the big stick. We did not start it. But if it is wielded, I believe we will keep a stiff upper lip, cool heads and calm brains, and do that after a challenge unprecedented in the history of this or any other movement."

And, again, he said :—

"We are told, 'You are up against stern economic facts,' but the whole process of the mind of man has been to conquer the forces that have been against him, either forces in nature or elsewhere, and it is not beyond the wit of man, if the best brains of the country are brought together, even with this report before it as a guide, to find the way out without depressing the standard of living of the men engaged in the industry. It is false economy to expect a man to go down a mine and do his best and come at the end of the week with not enough—not enough in thousands of cases—to feed himself, to say nothing of the wife and children who

are dependent on him, and the nations cannot slide out of this responsibility."

Mr. Bevin then proceeded to foreshadow the General Strike formation into which the Unions might be thrown. He said :—

"You are moving to an extraordinary position. In twenty-four hours from now you may have to cease being separate Unions for this purpose. For this purpose you will become one union with no autonomy. The miners will have to throw their lot and cause into the cause of the general movement, and the general movement will have to take the responsibility for seeing it through. But at the moment we feel that to begin wielding any sort of a threat in connection with the negotiations, in the stage they are now in, would be to place a weapon in the hands of our opponents.

"We are asking you to stay in London. You are to be our Parliament, you are to be our Assembly, our constituent assembly, an assembly where we will place the facts and the figures and the proposals and the problems that have to be submitted for calm judgment, and at the end take your instructions. . . . .

"The men ought not to be asked to make sacrifices until the other cards have been put upon the table, and until the reorganised methods and their effect are put into operation. That is our view. That is where we stand. I beg of the Conference to record this fact, that the negotiating committee will go back to Mr. Baldwin strengthened by this decision, strengthened by this offer, strengthened by an expression of willingness of this Conference to put force on one side and enthrone reason in trying to find a solution. But if the enthronement of reason is refused, let it be refused by our opponents and let them take the consequences."

The most significant feature of Mr. Cook's speech has already been mentioned, and the fact that his stated interpretation was apparently accepted by the whole of the Trade Union Executives present—824. Nevertheless, the Conference was not an enthusiastic one. It differed very greatly from the similar Conference of the 30th July in the previous year. This difference was expressed by Mr. W. J. Brown. He said : "I contrast the atmosphere of this meeting with the atmosphere which existed nine months ago. There is not a man here who cannot feel that the atmosphere is chilly." Cries of "No" are inserted in the published report, but every testimony agrees

that Mr. Brown was making no over-statement. His own contribution to the discussion was keenly resented by the platform. Here are his own words :—

D.43.

" We are asked to adjourn to-day on the night before what may be the last day of negotiations, without any conclusive demonstration of where the movement stands on this particular issue. It recalls to my mind the situation at the outbreak of the European war, when our own Prime Minister, rather than say where this country stood, preferred to do exactly what the General Council is doing here to-day—to stand aloof and to leave the attitude of this country in doubt right up to the last moment. (Cries of ' No '). You will allow me to put my case, friends. The justification of the General Council is that they do not want, at this stage, to use the big stick, and it is evident that they fear the effect of using the big stick upon public opinion and upon those who are opposed to us. I want to ask them whether they have considered the effect which the absence of a definite lead this afternoon is likely to have upon our own people—a factor which is at least as important as its effect on the other side. If we are to go into this business ; if it is in the mind of the General Council that the whole movement should back up the miners if peace cannot be got, then, in my opinion, the time has come to say it."

The meeting ended with the words of Mr. Thomas's reply :—

D.44.

" Do not let there be any sneers at the Parliamentary Party, because that is the position. The other point is that this resolution means exactly what is said. It means that we must continue our efforts to get an honourable peace and report the situation to you to-morrow. No, this is not the time for bluff or a big stick. This is the time to face a serious issue in a serious way and do the right thing at the right time."

On the second day of the Conference, on Friday, 30th April, the Conference resumed at 11 a.m., adjourned till 11.45 ; adjourned again till 3 p.m. ; then till 5 p.m., then till 6.15 p.m., then till 7.15, then till 9 p.m., then till 11 and again till 11.25 p.m. During the whole of this time they kept waiting, while they were told periodically by Mr. A. A. Purcell :—

First, that the position is exceedingly grave. (11.45 a.m.).

Secondly, that the Industrial Committee was still in negotiation with the Prime Minister and were still continuing their efforts—(3 p.m.).

That the Special Negotiating Committee was still in with the Prime Minister, and that they had told him that the situation was severely grave—(5 p.m.).

That the Miners had been called in to stand by, and that conversations with the Prime Minister had been resumed.

" They were most anxious to know how the Executives were faring, and I told them you were singing [. . . they sang ' Lead, kindly light ' . . .] and there was no sign of downheartedness." (6.15 p.m.).

" The Conference that has been carried on for some considerable time between the Negotiating Committee, the Prime Minister, Lord Birkenhead, and Sir Austen Chamberlain, has now been resumed with the Miners' representatives. It is of the highest importance for everybody to understand that the position has not improved and is not at the moment in what we would regard as a satisfactory state." (7.15 p.m.).

Finally, at 11.25 p.m., Mr. Arthur Pugh reported the discussions they had had with the Prime Minister the previous night :—

D.45.

" They had pointed out that no definite proposals had been received either from the Government or from the employers upon which negotiations could be conducted. All that had appeared was a statement published at the pithead with regard to reductions in wages, ' which the Government itself and public opinion would declare the miners were entitled definitely to refuse.' Consequently there was nothing upon which negotiations could be conducted Discussions then proceeded until about 1.30 on Friday morning and ended with the understanding that the Prime Minister was in touch

with a meeting of the mineowners and that the same day definite proposals would be placed before us.

Those proposals are conveyed in the following letter from the Premier to Mr. Herbert Smith,"

D.46.

10 Downing Street, S.W.1,
30th April, 1926.

DEAR MR. SMITH,—I am communicating with you by letter because it is important to save time.

I have now received from the coal owners the offer which, as I told you last night, they have been considering in conjunction with their district representatives. The offer is as follows, namely :—

A uniform national minimum of 20 per cent. over 1914 standard on a uniform 8-hour basis, with corresponding hours for surface men. (The representatives of North Wales do not wish to stand out of the national agreement, but feel that the pits in that area would be unable to work on this minimum).

In putting before you this proposal from the coal owners, I would remind you that, as I explained to you yesterday, it is contemplated that the 1919 (Seven Hours) Act should remain on the Statute Book, and that there should be legislation providing temporarily for the working of the additional hours.

The Government would set up a Commission not later than 31st December, 1929, to advise whether as a result of re-organisation or better trade or both, the condition of the coal industry has improved to an extent that makes a reversion to the standard hours justifiable.

There would, of course, be a national agreement on the lines of owners' draft, which has already been submitted to you, amended, however, to provide for a national minimum. I should like to hear from you what is your considered view upon this proposal.

It will be seen that a uniform national minimum is possible if there is for the time being a modification of the present hours. If, however, a temporary modification of

hours is ruled out, the owners do not feel able to put forward proposals which differ from those which they have already submitted. They are, however, prepared to negotiate the matter with you, in the first place nationally, in accordance with the report.

There would, of course, be the national agreement as already indicated. The Government has already intimated its general acceptance of the report of the Royal Commission, provided it was accepted also by the mineowners and the miners, and although unfortunately there has not been on the part of the mineowners and the miners the same unqualified acceptance, the Government desire, nevertheless, to reaffirm their willingness to give effect to such of the proposals in the Report as we believe will be of benefit to the industry.

In particular, the Government propose in any case at once to arrange an authoritative inquiry into the best method of following up the recommendations of the Commission with regard to selling organisation and amalgamations.

If the proposals now before you are not acceptable, I should be glad to receive from you any counter-proposal, and I am holding myself available to meet you again as soon as you let me know that you are ready for further discussion.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Pugh.

Yours very truly,

(Signed) Stanley Baldwin.

D.47.

30th April, 1926.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,—The proposals of the coal owners, delivered by messenger this afternoon (April 30th), have been considered by our Executive Committee, and also by the Conference which, as you are aware, has been in London since Wednesday, to which we are empowered to send the following reply :—

The miners note with regret that, although the report of the Coal Commission was issued on 6th March, 1926,

the mineowners have only submitted a proposal for a national wage agreement and a national uniform minimum percentage so late as April 30th, at 1.15 p.m., when at least two-thirds of the mine workers in the coalfield are already locked out by the coalowners.

The proposals, stated briefly, provide for a reversion to the minimum percentage of 1921, *i.e.*, 20 per cent. on 1914 standard wages, which means a uniform reduction of 13½ per cent. of the standard wages of the miners, and, further, is conditional upon the extension of the working day for over three years, such an adjustment to be reviewed after December, 1929.

The reply of the miners, after considering the proposals in the light of the present situation, is therefore as follows :— They are unanimously of the opinion that the proposals cannot be accepted, but, on the other hand, feel that the statement of proposals submitted (as enclosed) of the Trade Union Congress affords a reasonable basis of negotiations and settlement.

Our views on the question of extended hours are well known to you, and it is only necessary to say that the present hours

(*a*) Are long enough to supply all the coal for which a market can be found ;

(*b*) Are as long as men should be expected to pursue such a dangerous and arduous calling ; and

(*c*) That to extend hours in present circumstances is simply to swell the ranks of the unemployed ;

(*d*) That to increase hours is to invite similar measures on the part of our foreign competitors ;

(*e*) That such a proposal is contrary to the findings of the Royal Commission.

As to counter-proposals, we can only say that we will co-operate to the fullest extent with the Government and the owners in instituting such re-organisation as is recommended by the Commission. Until such re-organisation brings greater prosperity to the industry, the miners should

not be called upon to surrender any of their present inadequate wages and conditions.

On behalf of the Miners' Federation.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) Herbert Smith (President).
T. Richards (Vice-President).
W. P. Richardson (Treasurer).
A. J. Cook (Secretary).

Mr. Pugh, in his report upon Friday's negotiations, said :—

D.48.

" In subsequent discussions exception was taken to the last paragraph of the miners' reply, which says : ' the miners should not be called upon to surrender any of their present inadequate wages and conditions,' and we had a number of interviews on that. The Government submitted to us a memorandum endeavouring to rectify what they considered was not a clear statement of the miners' intentions. The quibble was about the word ' initiated.' The Government said :—

" The word ' initiated ' in the miners' reply is ambiguous. The Government have already intimated their general acceptance of the report. As a further indication of their intentions as to reorganisation the Government will be prepared, if the miners will accept the Report including the wages recommendation of the Report, to set up an advisory committee, on which the miners, as well as the mine-owners will be represented, to advise the Mines Department as to the steps that can be taken to put into operation whatever proposals for reorganisation are of benefit to the industry."

"We have not broken down on any important or vital question, but on a mere phrase. Your Committee have striven to the best of their ability, in conjunction with our friends of the Miners' Negotiating Committee, to endeavour to meet the Government's point in regard to the task to be employed in trying to carry out the terms of the agreement. We can only say that we regret that our negotiations have broken down, not on any cardinal principle, but on a mere phrase in the terms upon which we should enter into negotiations."

The Press were then invited to enter. Mr. Thomas gave a descriptive account of the negotiations, and one of the most telling passages of his speech was :—

D.49.

"My friends, when the verbatim reports are written, I suppose my usual critics will say that Thomas was almost grovelling, and it is true. In all my long experience—and I have conducted many negotiations—I say to you, and all my colleagues will bear testimony to it, I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all day to-day, and I pleaded not alone because I believed in the case of the miners, but because in my bones I believed that my duty to the country involved it. Therefore, I shall be content for our case to be judged on the verbatim reports that will be produced. But we failed. The Cabinet was summoned—such additional members as had not previously been in the negotiations, a number of whom had heard nothing of what had taken place, were called in to give their final decision, and their final decision was a refusal to accede to your request. Please observe, not to effect a settlement, but a refusal to accede to your request for a suspension of the notices so that negotiations could continue."

The Conference reassembled at 12.30 on the Saturday. Previous to the reassembling, the Executives had had an opportunity of considering separately the scheme for a co-ordinated policy in relation to this dispute, and they were asked to make their decisions public. An hour later it was announced that the General Council's policy had been accepted by a huge majority. The figures were :—

For the General Council's policy, 3,653,527.
Against the General Council's policy, 49,911.

In addition, there were 319,000 who had not yet been able to give a reply. The remainder of the Conference was comprised of speeches from Ernest Bevin, John Bromley of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen ; Herbert Smith, President of the Miners' Federation ; and the Right Hon. J. R. Macdonald. Mr. Bevin emphasised the historical importance of the occasion in his opening remarks, as follows :—

D.50.

"I desire to point out that, with a view to doing nothing at all which would aggravate the position, these proposals were not ready to hand to the General Secretaries, or rather the documents in the form in which you received it, until after we had received in our room the news that the Emergency Powers Act had been signed, and after the O.M.S. had already placed upon the printing press their preparatory literature. We looked upon that, and I think rightly, while our people were down there and we did not know what was really happening, as indicating that the Government, behind the scenes, was mobilising the forces of war. I think it was a right deduction in view of subsequent happenings. Sometimes it is said, that he who draws the sword perishes by the sword, and we all looked upon the action of the Government last night as equal in stupidity to the actions of the well-remembered Lord North and George III. combined, and the result may be fraught with as serious consequences as the action of George III. in the history of this country."

. . . . . .

"We look upon your 'yes' as meaning that you have placed your all upon the altar for this great movement, and, having placed it there, even if every penny goes, if every asset goes, history will ultimately write up that it was a magnificent generation that was prepared to do it rather than see the miners driven down like slaves."

. . . . . .

"I rely, in the name of the General Council, on every man and every woman in that grade to fight for the soul of Labour and the salvation of the miners."

Mr. Bromley, in his speech, roused cheers when he said :—

D.51.

"As far as my own people are concerned, every member of our Union, without exception, will be thrown into the battle at once. That is rather a proud position to hold, that we shall at least be part of the shock troops. . . . . How proud I am to be a part of this great movement and to see this splendid response. We have comrades not only worthy of the name, but worth fighting for."

Mr. Herbert Smith made a moving speech, thanking the Conference for their decision. Then the Right Hon. J. R. Macdonald was called upon to make the concluding speech of the Conference (printed in Appendix). After Mr. Macdonald's eloquent speech (which, however, contained a significant passage in its last sentence :—

" On Monday, we will raise a debate in the House of Commons, but I hope, I still hope, I believe, I must believe, that something will happen before then which will enable us to go about our work cheerily, heartily and hopefully during the next week,")

the proposal was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

D.52.

Before the very end, Mr. Herbert Smith made a remark of some importance in the light of after events. He had said in his speech : " On behalf of my Federation I said we were willing to take from page one to the last page and go through it. I want that to be carefully noted ; that I agreed to take it from page one to the end of that Report, and go thoroughly into it and inquire into it, and accept the findings when we had gone through it." He now added, " I just want to make it clear that I did not mean to say in my speech that I agreed to accept the Report. What I did intend to imply was that I am prepared to examine the Report from page one to the last page, and to stand by the result of the inquiry."

The delegates then sang " The Red Flag," and the Conference dispersed. The first British General Strike had been declared.

DOCUMENTS

D.55.

Statement presented to delegates at the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives, on April 29th :—

1. The economic situation in the coal mining industry has been dealt with fully in the Report of the Royal Commission. It is not, therefore, necessary for us to examine the position in detail.

2. The Commission, after investigating the position, recommended the following proposals :—

(1) Amalgamation of existing mines where units are at present too small.

(2) A closer connection of mining with allied industries.

(3) More extensive research.

(4) State purchase of Royalties.

(5) The formation of co-operative selling agencies, especially for the export trade.
(6) The establishment of an official system of sampling and analysis of coal.
(7) The retail sale of coal by local authorities.
(8) The use of larger wagons, and concentration of the ownership of wagons.
(9) The official declaration of transfer prices and the inclusion of the profits of selling agencies in the ascertainments.
(10) The extension of multiple shifts and possibly the redistribution of the existing total hours over the working week.
(11) Revision of the minimum percentages.
(12) The establishment of joint pit committees.
(13) The extension of payment by results.
(14) The introduction of the family allowance system.
(15) Profit-sharing schemes to be set up.
(16) General establishment of pit-head baths and proper provision of houses.
(17) National negotiations and agreements to continue.

We are satisfied, after careful investigation, that these cannot provide a solution for the immediate difficulties which arise on the 1st May.

3. In the negotiations which have ensued between the Government, Mining Association, and the Miners' Federation, attention has been concentrated almost exclusively upon questions relating to the wages, hours, and working conditions of the mine workers. Far more consideration needs to be given to the drastic reorganisation which both the Commission and the mine workers consider is required.

4. In our view the wages and working conditions of mine workers are already so depressed as to render it imperative to seek for remedies other than a further degradation in their standards of life, or the abrogation of the present standard hours, a course which the Commission declared would not provide a remedy.

5. The Commissioners have recognised this, and have stipulated that " before any sacrifices are asked from those engaged in the industry it shall be definitely agreed between them that all practicable means for improving its organisation and increasing its efficiency should be adopted as speedily as the circumstances in each case allow."

Assuming that effective reorganisation is undertaken on the lines of the Report of the Coal Commission, the industry should not only be made self-supporting, but provide a decent standard of living for those employed therein.

(6) The only proposals so far put forward by the coalowners seek to find an economic level at the expense of wages. The process of reducing wages cannot provide a solution, and would tend to intensify the present difficulty. The figures given in the Com-

mission's Report show quite clearly that to seek any further degradation of this level is quite indefensible. In any case, the lowering of wages is not a real remedy. It results in the lower efficiency of labour, and immediately provokes reprisals of a similar kind in other countries, leaving the competitive position unchanged.

7. The effect on the international situation was strikingly expressed on the 28th April, 1926, by Dr. Luther, the German Chancellor, who said that, as a result of the British Subsidy, German coal prices had to be reduced in order that Germany might regain a share in the world market. He also stated that as a direct consequence many mines had been closed down in the Ruhr, and 66,000 miners had been thrown out of work, while others had been placed on short time. The net result was, he said, that both countries had squandered the property of their own people, and had increased the competitive ability of these countries by cheapening coal prices.

8. The present position has been aggravated by the method by which the subsidy has been granted by the Government and used by the coalowners to lower artificially the price of coal. The present price is unquestionably an uneconomic one, and does not reflect the real position of the industry.

This fact is illustrated by the following figures, taken from the Board of Trade Returns for the past three months of 1925 (before the Subsidy) and 1926 (under the Subsidy).

EXPORT OF COAL—FIRST THREE MONTHS OF

1925.		1926.	
Tons.	£	Tons.	£
13,102,317	13,803,726	13,190,584	12,031,042

In other words, exports under the subsidy amounted to 88,000 tons more, while the value was £1,772,000 less (a fall in price of 1s 11d per ton).

9. The diversity in conditions and methods of production which exists between colliery and colliery makes it essential that an analysis of the economic and geological condition of the industry be obtained, and that in order to arrive at considered conclusions as to the precise remedies which would be applied, the Government should obtain and produce figures relating to the actual individual collieries. The miners have no direct access to such statistics, and the Government alone has the facilities for collecting them.

Collieries should be divided into—

(*a*) Efficient and able to pay present wages.

(*b*) Inefficient but able to pay present wages, if reorganised and rendered efficient.

(*c*) Inefficient and incapable for physical reasons of being able to pay present wages.

We accordingly need to know precisely how every pit now working is situated in this respect.

10. The preliminary division would be into pits now able to pay present wages, and those unable to pay. The numbers and other particulars could be furnished by the Owners without great difficulty.

The remaining pits would need to be inspected, and a provisional verdict given as to their category. We should require to know for pits in—

Category (*a*)—Number employed and output, with proportion for home and export respectively.

Category (*b*)—Number employed, output (with home and export proportions) and estimate of capital required to set in order.

Category (*c*)—Number employed, output (with home and export proportions) and situation.

11. Efforts should be made to restore pithead prices to an economic level and proper arrangements should be entered into to avoid undercutting between colliery and colliery.

12. It is impossible to measure the exact degree of economies which could be effected by the use of selling agencies and prevention of overlapping in the export trade and under-selling in the home market, but such economies would materially help the position. Similarly the power of municipalities to sell coal by retail while allowing for an increase in the pithead price, would not necessarily increase the price to the consumer.

13. Amalgamations.—In our view no satisfactory solution can be come to without compulsory powers being invested in commissioners for the amalgamation of undertakings. Alternatively, after examination by commissioners, a time limit should be fixed, by which date amalgamations should be voluntarily effected or otherwise compulsory powers exerted.

With regard to the reorganisation of districts or undertakings, such commissioners should set forth the amount of new capital required to be expended, and the Government should facilitate the granting of financial assistance.

14. Restriction of Entry and Registration.—There should be established an efficient registration of mine workers and a definite restriction of recruitment of new workers into the industry, and no fresh recruits over the age of 18 should be employed until the unemployed mine workers have been absorbed.

15. Displacement of Labour.—It seems unavoidable that, even with reorganisation, a number of collieries will remain completely uneconomic. There is no alternative to the closing of such uneconomic collieries. The workers who are displaced as a consequence of this should be provided for by (*a*) transference of such men as may be mobile, and who would transfer with Government assistance, as indicated in the report of the Commission; and (*b*) continuous maintenance of those who cannot be, and for whom alternative employment cannot be found. The Trade Union Congress are prepared to consult and co-operate with all parties concerned to facilitate the rapid construction of new houses to accommodate the transferred workers.

16. National Negotiations.—We regard the maintenance of national negotiations as imperative, and the continuance of a National Wages Board.

17. Throughout the negotiations the Miners' Executive have repeatedly expressed their willingness to consider any proposals which the Government or the Mineowners are prepared to submit for securing the speedy and effective reorganisation of the mining industry.

D.56.

Mr. MacDonald's Speech to the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives on May 1 :—

My Friends, he would be a poor creature indeed, poor in mind and poor in soul, who was not deeply moved by the emotion of this moment, and really, largely on account of physical infirmities, I should prefer just to finish, along with my colleague Mr. Henderson, as we started, by sitting in a back seat. But the Government has decided otherwise. The Government has decided to fight the standard of life of our people, and that battle cannot be kept off the floor of the House of Commons. And I know it is because that is in your minds that you have asked me to follow with—if Herbert does not misunderstand me—more pride than I have ever followed him before, the speech that Herbert Smith has just delivered.

We are pictured this morning in some of the newspapers as though we had been wanting war. In the name of everything I hold sacred, in the name of the most conscientious beliefs that I have got, I tell you, and I tell the British public, that I have never been associated with a body of men that have striven, that have fought, that have turned phrases and words and facts over more patiently, more religiously, with a more firm desire to make peace and to have peace, than the colleagues with whom I have been working during the last two or three days.

At ten o'clock last night, I confess to you, I believed that we had got peace, and do to-day—and I ask the British public; not only you, but I ask the great mass of people outside who do want justice done in this matter, who do believe in fair play. I ask them, irrespective of the twist that is given in the newspapers this morning, to believe what I say in that respect. And more, I ask them to read every word that Herbert Smith has said, and when they have done that, I will challenge them to come to any conclusion, but that the decision of the Government last night to break off negotiations was a crime against society. As Bevin has reminded us, it has been said, and it has been said with too much truth, that they who draw the sword will fall by the sword.

My Friends and Colleagues, you can go away home this afternoon fully convinced that if the sword has been drawn, your representatives stood the last two days with their hands on the hilt of that sword, doing their best to prevent somebody else drawing that sword. And when it was drawn, towards midnight last night, it was not the hand of Thomas, not the hand of Herbert Smith, not the hand of any miner, not the hand of any man belonging to the General Council or to the Industrial Committee, it was the

hand of the present Government that drew that sword and is now flaunting it in the face of the public of Great Britain.

One final word. They said there was no time. Herbert Smith has made a statement to-day about the attitude of the miners to the Report that must satisfy everybody who knows anything about negotiations, that there is no cause or impediment, so far as the miners are concerned, against full negotiation on that Report. Nobody can take an opposite view. The miners have made their case clear. I ask the public, what is to be their decision on that matter? The Government said: "We have no time." I say to you that I am profoundly convinced if we had had another half-a-dozen hours the Government could not in decency have drawn a sword at all, but they would not give it to us. They wasted the time. Since February, 1925, we have been telling them to put what minds they have into this problem, and they have refused. Since 1925 when the first questions were addressed to Mr. Baldwin across the floor of the House of Commons, warning him that in the case of this coal industry there was disease, trouble, disillusion, and asking the Government what it was going to do. They were repeated again and again and again, and at the eleventh hour (1926) confessed that they were unprepared, either with an offer or to make one themselves. They doled out other people's money from that day to this, and they have not employed five minutes of their time to consider the coal problem except in so far as it is associated with the O.M.S. or some such project of fighting as that. Last night, astounded at the reasonableness of Herbert Smith, they finished up by putting a question to him that ought never to have been put.

How did the negotiations break down? Not because the men refused to negotiate, but Herbert Smith was asked: "Will you, before a word of negotiation has been uttered, before you meet, before you meet the other side, will you agree to a reduction of wages?" What reply was the only reply that anybody, employer or workman, would think of giving to such a question as that? A negative. Agreement comes after negotiation and not before. Ah, my friends, I am still, I confess, old-fashioned enough to believe in public opinion. More; I have another cardinal creed—I believe in the fair-mindedness of British public opinion, and I cannot help thinking, although the sands have almost emptied in the glass—at twenty minutes past two on Saturday; the miners locked out—I cannot help feeling but that there are men belonging to the Government who are ashamed of last night. I cannot help feeling but that there are men sitting on the front Government bench, whom we will face on Monday, who, in the interval would like to revise what has been done, and I cannot help feeling this, that there are millions of decent men and women in the country who do not agree with us in politics and do not agree with you in trades unionism, but, nevertheless, do agree with you and me and all of us in this, that the miners have a right to put human claims before everything else.

We have come to a time when the miner's wife has got to meet her husband with tears in her eyes because she cannot fulfil her duties as wife. The humblest miner's wife has to look at her child with an aching heart instead of a proud one. There are millions of men, flesh of my flash, blood of my blood, who hold with me the same traditions of Britain—Scotsmen, Englishmen, Welshmen—who will say that this fight is a wicked fight, an unnecessary fight, a criminal fight. Will say to the Government, " In God's name, put no more silly or improper questions. Trust the word of an honourable man, Herbert Smith. Trust the power of intelligent men like those who are sitting here on both sides of me—the General Council, with Mr. Pugh in the chair, and the Industrial Committee—go on conducting negotiations and end the dispute."

Well, my friends, I do not know whether I am too sentimental or not, but on Monday, if there is no response, put it down that there is one man who has to confess that he is lamentably disillusioned regarding the character of the public of this country. So, my friends, on Monday we will have to raise it in the House of Commons. We will stand our corner, don't you make any mistake about it. We will perhaps not be dancing about, but we will be by the miners' side, because it is a just side, an honourable side. Because it does not matter what we are now, it is what we were. It is the whole life of the toiling masses that we have been working for, striving for, not to make enemies to society, but to make the very best friends society has got—the miner, the engineer, the worker in the field, all toiling, toiling, toiling, all honest men, able men, skilled men, contributing to the commonwealth so that they themselves might live honourable and magnificent individual lives. That is our ideal. It is in that spirit, in that firmness of purpose—purpose you want, not words—in that firmness of purpose we will stand by you. If you want us to help you in this way we will do it. On Monday we will raise a debate in the House of Commons, but I hope, I still hope, I believe, I must believe, that something will happen before then which will enable us to go about our work cheerily and heartily and hopefully during the next week. If not, we are there in the battle with you, taking our share uncomplainingly until the end has come and until right and justice have been done.

Chapter XI

AFTER THE ELEVENTH HOUR

Between the moment of the declaration of the General Strike at half-past two on the 1st May until its actually becoming operative by the cessation of work on Monday evening, there intervened twenty-six and a half hours. On the Government side, this time was spent in final preparatory measures. All Saturday night and Sunday night over the expanse of the British railway system, coal traffic and general goods traffic were being carried.

On the Labour side a small part of the time was spent in preliminary strike orders and similar activities, while the first preparatory measures for the crisis were being sketched out. The most part, and certainly the most important part of the activities of Labour headquarters were, however, devoted to a further process of negotiations. Despite the position reached on the Friday, the members of the Industrial Committee undauntedly took up the task again of persuading an unwilling Government into a peaceful frame of mind. All their endeavours turned out to be fruitless, and there would therefore be little need to narrate them here if it had not been that they gave rise to much controversy both at the time and in the subsequent pleadings and counter pleadings put before the Labour movement.

For an account of what happened during these last days we have three documents of prime importance. The first is the debate in the House of Commons on the night of May 3rd and 4th, the accounts given both

by Mr. Thomas and Mr. Macdonald of the part played by the Labour side in the week-end negotiations are necessarily limited by the exigencies of a Parliamentary debate. That is to say, the sort of speech made and the sort of facts brought out in the debate in the House of Commons may be materially different from the treatment of the same facts before a Conference of Trade Union Executives or before a meeting of workers in a mining area. But on the other hand, their account has the merit of being strictly contemporary.

The second document is the pamphlet by Mr. A. J. Cook, entitled *The Nine Days*, the story of the General Strike, told by the Miners' Secretary, which was published during the first three weeks of June. This history, by the central figure of the mining dispute which led to the General Strike, is of very great importance as evidence of what occurred, an importance enhanced by the writer's reputation for outspokenness and candour. On the other hand it is written within a few days after the end of the General Strike, and in a sense may be regarded as the case for the miners and against the General Council.

Thirdly, there is the Report of the General Council, prepared for the Conference of Trade Union Executives, which was to have been held on the 25th June and withheld from publication officially when that Conference was postponed, but unofficially published by Mr. Bromley in the journal of the Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. This is necessarily to a large extent a reply to Mr. Cook's pamphlet.

Besides these three documents of prime importance, there were published in the period immediately succeeding the General Strike a series of articles and accounts in the Socialist and Communist press, of which perhaps the most important were the accounts given by Mr. Brailsford, for many years a leader of Labour and

Socialist thought and policy, and by the writer in *Lansbury's Labour Weekly.*

At this moment it is not necessary to go into the discussion of the issues raised in these fiercely argued accounts of what happened, but it is desirable that in the references following throughout this chapter the reader should be clearly aware of the nature of the sources from which the fact or document is drawn.

Mr. Cook's account of this phase of the history runs as follows :—

D.57.

" On May 1st, the Conference of Executives had decided by 3,653,529 votes to 49,911 to empower the General Council to go ahead with the General Strike.

Thus the trade union movement laid down with great enthusiasm and determination a policy of preparedness to meet the great capitalist offensive.

After this wonderful decision of the Union Executives, all left for their homes with the determination to carry out the policy agreed upon. My Committee also left for their districts for the week-end to make preparations now that the men were locked out.

They went to this work feeling certain that, as the Government had repeatedly refused to consider any sort of fair terms for the miners, after long hours of negotiations, and as the Union E.C.'s had been almost unanimous in their decision to fight and the T.U.C. had undertaken not to negotiate without us, they could leave London safely ; but no sooner had the delegates left for home than the following two letters were despatched to the Government by the General Council :—

D.58.

" 32 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1,
1st May, 1926.

To the Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P., 10 Downing Street, Whitehall, S.W.1.

Mining Lock-out.

Dear Sir,—I have to advise you that the Executive

Committees of the Trade Union Congress, including the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, have decided to hand over to the General Council of the T.U.C. the conduct of the dispute, and all the negotiations in connection therewith will be undertaken by the General Council. I am directed to say that the General Council will hold themselves available at any moment should the Government desire to discuss the matter further.—Yours faithfully,

WALTER M. CITRINE, Acting Secretary."

Following the receipt of the letter, the Prime Minister invited the Trade Union Congress representatives to meet him at 10 Downing Street at 8 p.m.

The second letter dealt with the essential food stuffs.

D.59.

" I had arranged (Mr. Cook goes on to say) to keep in constant touch with the T.U.C. and to be at my office ready to give any information that was needed. To my surprise and alarm I heard quite by accident on Saturday evening, at about 9 p.m., that the Negotiating Committee of the T.U.C. were closeted in Downing Street with the Prime Minister.

I could feel no other than apprehension, seeing that I had not been informed, and they were there presumably discussing the miners' case in the absence of the miners' representatives. It was not jealousy that prompted my suspicions, but my responsibility to my President, Herbert Smith, and to my colleagues, and to the million men in the British coalfields."

The facts of this do not appear to be disputed, but there is a whole world of difference in the way in which the facts were regarded. In their official statement, unofficially published (but never repudiated), the General Council used the following language in describing the despatch of the letter :—

D.60.

The Conference definitely accepted the position that the Mining Dispute had ceased to be merely a question

for the Miners' Federation. The General Council, as representing the movement as a whole, was now charged with the responsibility for future policy in consultation with the Miners' representatives, and that its duty was to endeavour to get negotiations renewed and the lock-out notices withdrawn. Consequently the Council met after the Conference and addressed the following letter to the Prime Minister. [As above, D.58.]

It will be seen that whereas the miners' representatives apparently regarded the May Day Conference as setting a gulf between the workers and the capitalists, the General Council regarded this same Conference as a means whereby to bridge that gulf. We learn that the Prime Minister suggested that a possible basis for getting negotiations going could be more easily reached in a less formal manner by the appointment of a sub-committee of three from either side. Mr. Cook believes the sub-committee to have been Mr. Pugh, Mr. Citrine and Mr. Thomas. The little conclave of six, at one o'clock on Sunday morning, were discussing the following formula submitted by the Prime Minister :

D.61.

" The Prime Minister has satisfied himself as a result of the conversations he has had with the representatives of the Trades Union Congress, that if negotiations are continued (it being understood that the notices cease to be operative) the representatives of the Trades Union Congress are confident that a settlement could be reached on the lines of the Report within a fortnight."

Mr. Cook comments :—

" It must be clearly understood that this formula meant a reduction of wages and district agreements—conditions against which the T.U.C. had themselves declared."

The same day, Sunday, 2nd May, at 10.30 in the morning the General Council met. The proceedings of Downing Street were reported and the formula

discussed. Mr. Cook was asked to summon his Executive to London to consult with the General Council, and he himself was requested to attend 32 Eccleston Square. Mr. Cook says of this meeting :

D.62.

" I vehemently protested first against the Negotiating Committee of the T.U.C. having discussions with the Prime Minister in the absence of the miners' representatives, and secondly against the acceptance of a formula which was contrary to the declared policy of the miners, contrary to the policy of the T.U.C. as expressed in their declarations of February 26th, and after, and contrary to the instructions given to the T.U.C. by the Union Conference of May 1st. With the Negotiating Committee I met the General Council. I learnt that arrangements had been made to meet the Prime Minister again during the day. When before the General Council I again made my protest on behalf of my colleagues and myself, pleading with them not to commit us to a policy in contradiction to the one agreed upon.

For the moment I will not write all that is so vivid in my mind of what took place, but the statements of Bromley and Thomas I shall never forget.

One of these statements demanded clearly and definitely that the miners accept the Commission's Report with full consciousness that it meant a reduction in wages. Both urged that *they* had had to accept reductions in wages, and the miners would have to do the same.

We did have some friends who will yet, I am sure, prove themselves true friends of the miners, and I left the meeting without a decision being arrived at in my presence. I have not yet learnt whether the whole General Council arrived at a decision to accept that formula. I left believing that they would not meet the Prime Minister again without the miners' representatives.

My colleagues arrived—as many as possible—on Sunday evening—practically the majority of the Executive, when I informed them of what had taken place, and my President and Committee unanimously endorsed my action."

In the meantime the General Council had decided to accept the substance of the formula, but that their representatives should raise questions with the Prime Minister as to its terms. The sub-committee of the Negotiating Committee again met the Prime Minister and his two colleagues in the cabinet room at Downing Street. At this meeting, according to the Special Industrial Committee Report, the parties proceeded to discuss the formula, and efforts were made to revise it in some form that might prove acceptable. Mr. Cook appears to be making a reference to the same meeting when he says :—

D.63.

" During that Sunday evening, while the small sub-committee were meeting with the Prime Minister and his colleagues in private, a formula had been drafted as follows :

" We will urge the miners to authorise us to enter upon a decision with the understanding that they and we accept the Report as the basis of a settlement, and we approach it with the knowledge that it may involve some reduction of wages."

While this or other formulae were being discussed between the sub-committee and the full Industrial Committee and between them and the miners, who by this time had been summoned to Downing Street, there came a sudden interruption.

The representatives of the General Council were asked to see the Prime Minister. Mr. Baldwin told them that the proceedings must close, and handed them the following document :—

D.64.

" H.M. Government believe that no solution of the difficulties in the coal industry which is both practicable and honourable to all concerned can be reached except by sincere acceptance of the report of the Commission.

In the expression ' acceptance of the report ' is included both the reorganisation of the industry, which should be put in hand immediately, and pending the results of the

reorganisation being attained such interim adjustment of wages or hours of work as will make it economically possible to carry on the industry.

In the meantime, if the miners or the Trade Union Committee on their behalf, were prepared to say plainly that they accept this proposal, the Government would have been ready to resume the negotiations and to continue the subsidy for a fortnight, but since the discussions which have taken place between the miners and the members of the Trade Union Committee it has come to the knowledge of the Government, not only that specific instructions have been sent under the authority of the Executives of Trade Unions represented at the Conference, convened by the General Council of the Trade Union Congress, directing their members in several of the most vital industries and services of the country to carry out a general strike on Tuesday next, but that overt acts have already taken place, including gross interference with the freedom of the Press.

Such action involves a challenge to the constitutional rights and freedom of the nation.

His Majesty's Government, therefore, before it can continue negotiations, must require from the Trade Union Committee both a repudiation of the actions referred to that have already taken place, and an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the instructions for a general strike."

To this midnight cartel the General Council sent the following reply at 3.30 a.m. on Monday, 3rd May :

D.65.

"Your letter of the 3rd inst. announcing the Government's decision to terminate the discussion which has been resumed on Saturday night, was received by the General Council with surprise and regret.

The negotiations which had taken place between the Industrial Committee of the General Council and representatives of the Cabinet had been adjourned for a brief period in order to allow the Industrial Committee to confer with the full General Council and representatives of the Miners' Federation, who were on your premises, in order to advance the efforts which the Industrial Committee had persis-

tently been making to accomplish a speedy and honourable settlement of the mining dispute.

The trade union representatives were astounded to learn that, without any warning, the renewed conversations, which it was hoped might pave the way to the opening of full and unfettered negotiations, had been abruptly terminated by the Government for the reason stated in your communication.

The first reason given was that specific instructions have been sent under the authority of trade unions represented at the conference, convened by the General Council of the T.U.C., directing their members in several industries and services to cease work.

I am directed to remind you that there is nothing unusual for workmen to cease work in defence of their interests as wage-earners, and that the specific reason for the decision in this case is to secure for the mine workers the same right from the employers as is insisted upon by employers from workers, namely, that negotiations shall be conducted free from the atmosphere of strike or lock-out. This is the principle which Governments have held to be cardinal in the conduct of industrial negotiations.

With regard to the second reason, that 'overt acts have already taken place, including gross interference with the freedom of the Press,' it is regretted that no information is contained in your letter.

The General Council had no knowledge of any such acts having occurred, and the decision taken by them definitely forbade any such independent and unauthorised action.

The Council are not aware of the circumstances under which the alleged acts have taken place. It cannot accept any responsibility for them, and is taking prompt measures to prevent any acts of indiscipline.

The Council regret that they were not given an opportunity to investigate and deal with the alleged incidents before the Government made them an excuse for breaking off the peace discussions which were proceeding.

The public will judge of the Government's intentions by its precipitous and calamitous decision in this matter, and we deplore with the General Council that the sincere work which the Council has been engaged in to obtain an honourable settlement has been wrecked by the Government's unprecedented ultimatum."

DOCUMENTS

The following statement was issued by the Miners' Federation on the evening of Sunday, May 2 :—

D.66.

"A number of incorrect or misleading statements have appeared since Saturday morning concerning the attitude of the Miners' Federation to any possible reductions in

wages. In view of this and in view also of many telegrams from districts and branches of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain asking for reassurance on this point, it is necessary to make clear that under no circumstances can the miners accept any agreement which lowers their standard of living.

The delegate conference of the Miners' Federation last week, after receiving the unanimous reports of the districts against any reductions in wages, increases in hours, or district agreements, reaffirmed its unalterable opposition to any settlement embodying any of these proposals.

The conference on Saturday morning gave its complete approval to the report by Mr. Herbert Smith, President of the Federation, of the final meeting with the Government the previous evening, and particularly applauded his statement that the miners could not accept any further reduction of their wages, which are already too low."

A. J. COOK.

D.67.

THE following notification by the Home Secretary was issued from the Deputy Chief Civil Commissioner's Office on Sunday evening, May 2:—

"Although discussions are still proceeding in view of the action of the T.U.C., the country must be prepared for a general strike in many industries and public services on Monday night.

The Government has taken all steps to maintain the supply of food, fuel, light, and power; the protection of all engaged in these services; and for the preservation of law and order.

Recruiting stations for volunteers will be opened to-morrow.

All loyal citizens should hold themselves in readiness to assist the Government.

Full information will be issued to-morrow, but in the event of any difficulty occurring in finding the right office on Tuesday, inquiries should be made at the nearest police station."

PART TWO
THE NINE DAYS

Part II

THE NINE DAYS

Tuesday, May 4th, started with the workers answering the call. What a wonderful response ! What loyalty ! ! What solidarity ! ! ! From John o' Groats to Land's End the workers answered the call to arms to defend us, to defend the brave miner in his fight for a living wage.

Hurriedly the General Council formed their Committees, made preparations to face this colossal task—the first in the history of this country. No one could over-estimate the greatness of the task that faced the General Council, and to the credit of many of the members—especially Ernest Bevin—they made every effort possible to bring into being machinery to cope with the requirements.

The difficulties of transport, of communication, of giving information, were enormous ; but the foresight and energy of the officials in the country and of the rank and file rose to the occasion. Links were formed, bulletins were issued ; officials, staff and voluntary workers of the T.U.C. and the Labour Party worked night and day to create the machinery necessary to link up the whole movement—machinery that would have been prepared by common-sense leadership months and months before.

It was a wonderful achievement, a wonderful accomplishment that proved conclusively that the Labour Movement has the men and women that are capable in an emergency of providing the means of carrying on the country. Who can forget the effect of motor conveyances with posters saying : "By Permission of the T.U.C. ?" The Government with its O.M.S. were absolutely demoralised. Confidence, calm, and order prevailed everywhere, despite the irritation caused by the volunteers, blacklegs, and special constables. The workers acted as one. Splendid discipline ! Splendid loyalty !

—From "The Nine Days," by A. J. Cook.

Chapter XII

THE FIRST OF MAY, 1926

Hitherto we have dealt with the nine months preceding the General Strike in summary fashion; a summary that became more and more extended as the end of April approached. In the chapters that follow, a record of the strike will be given day by day. It will begin on 30th April with the record of such activities as can be definitely included under the heading of strike or anti-strike operations. The negotiations that continued up till the evening of Monday, May 3rd, have been included in the first part of the book because they were continuous with the course of earlier negotiations.

In this second part of the book an endeavour will be made to let the documents of the General Strike tell the story themselves. Over events that have been so hotly argued there are bound to be differences of interpretation and emphasis. These must be supplied by the reader. The writer has limited himself to the presentation of these documents in as intelligible order as possible. The documents of each day will be preceded by a brief diary.

Section 1.—Friday, April 30th

The King signed a Proclamation at Buckingham declaring a State of Emergency. Orders in Council were issued in the form of Emergency Regulations. Local Authorities were reminded by a Ministry of Health Circular of the measures that, as previously arranged, should be taken to cope with a national stoppage. The names of the Civil Commissioners

and their staffs were published. An O.M.S. placard, calling for recruits, was posted throughout the country. It was officially announced that troops had been moved to South Wales, Lancashire and Scotland; and that arrangements had been made for assistance from the Navy.

At 1.15 p.m. the first offer was made by the owners, involving heavy reductions and increased hours, when already 40,000 men in the coalfields were locked out. During the day, Conferences were held between the Government, Coal-owners, Miners and the Industrial Committee of the T.U.C. These negotiations proved fruitless.

D.68.

Saturday, 1st May, 1926.

BY THE KING.

A PROCLAMATION.

George R.I.

Whereas by the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, it is enacted that if it appears to Us that any action has been taken or is immediately threatened by any persons or body of persons of such a nature and on so extensive a scale as to be calculated, by interfering with the supply and distribution of food, water, fuel, or light, or with the means of locomotion, to deprive the community, or any substantial portion of the community, of the essentials of life, We may, by Proclamation, declare that a state of emergency exists:

And whereas the present immediate threat of cessation of work in Coal Mines does, in Our opinion, constitute a state of emergency within the meaning of the said Act:

Now, therefore, in pursuance of the said Act, We do, by and with the advice of Our Privy Council, hereby declare that a state of emergency exists.

Given at Our Court at Buckingham Palace, this Thirtieth day of April, in the year of Our Lord

One thousand nine hundred and twenty-six, and in the Sixteenth year of Our Reign.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

D.69.

Regulation 21 of the Emergency Regulations, 1926, reads :—

(1) If any person attempts or does any act calculated or likely to cause mutiny, sedition, or disaffection among any of His Majesty's forces, or among the members of any police force, or any fire brigade, or among the civilian population, or to impede, delay, or restrict any measures taken for securing and regulating the supply or distribution of food, water, fuel, light or other necessities, or for maintaining the means of transit or of locomotion, or for any other purposes essential to the public safety or the life of the community, he shall be guilty of an offence against these regulations :

Provided that a person shall not be guilty of an offence under this regulation by reason only of his taking part in a strike or peacefully persuading any other person to take part in a strike.

(2) If any person, without lawful authority or excuse, has in his possession, or on premises in his occupation or under his control, any document containing any report or statement, the publication of which would be a contravention of the foregoing provisions of this regulation, he shall be guilty of an offence against these regulations unless he proves that he did not know and had no reason to suspect that the document contained any such report or statement, or that he had no intention of transmitting or circulating the document, or distributing copies thereof to or amongst other persons.

D.71.

Ministry of Health,
Whitehall, S.W.1,
April 30, 1926.

Sir,—I am instructed by the Minister of Health to refer to Circular 636 of November 20, 1925, and to state that

the following information is communicated to you in accordance with the third paragraph of the introductory section of that circular.

It is to be hoped that the present negotiations on the coal industry will have a successful issue; but if unfortunately this should not be the case, and there should be a stoppage of the industry upon a national scale, the Government consider it necessary that part of the organisation referred to in the above circular should be set in readiness to operate.

I am accordingly directed to transmit to you the enclosed list of Civil Commissioners and their divisional staffs which will be set up upon the issue of a proclamation under the Emergency Powers Act should the Government deem such proclamation to be necessary in the national interest. If such a stoppage is confined to the coal industry it is hoped that it will not be necessary to expand this emergency organisation extensively, or to call for recruits for assisting to maintain essential services.

Should, however, the area of the dispute be unhappily so widened as to cause a stoppage in other industries affecting such services, you will receive from the Civil Commissioner for your division a list of the area representatives of the several services referred to in paragraph 2 of the circular, together with the names of the chairman and vice-chairman of the volunteer service committees with whom it is hoped that your council and their officers will find it possible to co-operate to the fullest extent.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

W. A. ROBINSON.

The circular (Circular 699), which was addressed to clerks of town, county, Metropolitan borough, and urban district councils, was accompanied by a list of Civil Commissioners, staffs and office addresses. The Civil Commissioners' names were :—

Headquarters :

The Right Hon. Sir W. Mitchell-Thomson, Bt., K.B.E., M.P., Chief Civil Commissioner.

A. B. Lowry, C.B., Principal Chief Assistant.
C. F. Roundell, C.B.E., Deputy Principal Chief Assistant,

Divisional Civil Commissioners :—

Eastern Division :
Major Sir Philip Sassoon, Bt., G.B.E., C.M.G., M.P.

London and Home Counties Division :
Major W. Cope, M.P.

Midland Division :
Lieut.-Col. Hon. G. F. Stanley, C.M.G., M.P.

North-Eastern Division :
Capt. D. H. Hacking, O.B.E., M.P.

Northern Division :
Sir Kingsley Wood, M.P.

Docks Area, London :
Lieut.-Col. J. T. C. Moore-Brabazon, M.C., M.P.

North Midland Division :
Capt. H. Douglas King, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.P.

North-Western Division :
Major G. Hennessy, O.B.E., M.P.

South Midland Division :
Major Rt. Hon. Earl Winterton, M.P.

South Wales Division :
The Earl of Clarendon.

South-Western Division :
Rt. Hon. Earl Stanhope, D.S.O., M.C.

Scotland was itself divided into Districts, the Minister in charge of the Emergency Organisation being the Lord Advocate.

Section 2.—Saturday, 1st May

At 12 o'clock the Conference of Executives of Unions affiliated to the T.U.C. met at the Memorial Hall, and

formally approved, by 3,653,529 votes to 49,911, the General Council's proposals for a General Strike, to begin at midnight on Monday, May 3. The industries to be involved in the strike were :—All transport ; printing and the press ; iron and steel, metals and heavy chemicals ; building (with the exception of houses and hospitals) ; electricity and gas. It was recommended that sanitary, health and food services should continue. The workers were actually to be called out by their respective unions. Instructions were given to Trades Councils, and the following important section related to the resumption of work :— " The General Council further directs that the Executives of the Unions concerned shall definitely declare that in the event of any action being taken and trade union agreements being placed in jeopardy, it be definitely agreed that there will be no general resumption of work until those agreements are fully recognised."

The Unions concerned began to issue strike orders, to be followed by counter messages from employers, and from certain other unions. The Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party issued a message to all workers. So did the Minority Movement.

Instructions were issued by the Board of Trade for the distribution and use of fuel. The Government took over the broadcasting stations, and at this the T.U.C. issued a protest. Mr. Baldwin's classic message, " Keep steady. Remember that peace on earth comes to men of good-will " was broadcast.

The T.U.C. and the Premier resumed negotiations at 9 p.m.

D.72.

THE GENERAL STRIKE ORDER.

(T.U.C. Memorandum).

SCOPE.—The Trades Union Congress General Council

and the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, having been unable to obtain a satisfactory settlement of the matters in dispute in the coal-mining industry, and the Government and the mineowners having forced a lock-out, the General Council, in view of the need for co-ordinated action on the part of affiliated Unions, in defence of the policy laid down by the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, directs as follows :—

1. Trades and Undertakings to Cease Work.

Except as hereinafter provided, the following trades and undertakings shall cease work, as and when required by the General Council :—

Transport, including all affiliated Unions connected with transport, *i.e.*, railways, sea transport, docks, wharves, harbours, canals, road transport, railway repair shops ; and contractors for railways and all Unions connected with the maintenance of, or equipment, manufacturing, repairs, and groundsmen employed in connection with air transport.

Printing trades, including the Press.

Productive industries, iron and steel, metal, and heavy chemicals group, including all metal workers and other workers who are engaged or may be engaged in installing alternative plant to take the place of coal.

Building Trade.—All workers engaged on building, except such as are employed definitely on housing and hospital work, together with all workers engaged in the supply of equipment to the building industry, shall cease work.

Electricity and Gas.—The General Council recommend that the Trade Unions connected with the supply of electricity and gas shall co-operate with the object of ceasing to supply power. The Council request that the Executives of the Trade Unions concerned shall meet at once with a view to formulating common policy.

Sanitary Services.—The General Council direct that sanitary services be continued.

Health and Food Services.—The General Council recommend that there should be no interference in regard to these, and that the Trade Unions concerned should do

everything in their power to organise the distribution of milk and food to the whole of the population.

With regard to hospitals, clinics, convalescent homes, sanatoria, infant welfare centres, maternity homes, nursing homes, schools, the General Council direct that affiliated Unions take every opportunity to ensure that food, milk, medical and surgical supplies shall be efficiently provided.

2. TRADE UNION DISCIPLINE.—(*a*) The General Council direct that, in the event of Trade Unionists being called upon to cease work, the Trade Unions concerned shall take steps to keep a daily register to account for every one of their members. It should be made known that any workers called upon to cease work should not leave their own district, and by following another occupation, or the same occupation in another district, blackleg their fellow-workers.

(*b*) The General Council recommend that the actual calling out of the workers should be left to the Unions, and instructions should only be issued by the accredited representatives of the Unions participating in the dispute.

3. TRADES COUNCILS.—The work of the Trades Councils, in conjunction with the local officers of the Trade Unions actually participating in the dispute, shall be to assist in carrying out the foregoing provisions, and they shall be charged with the responsibility of organising the Trade Unionists in dispute in the most effective manner for the preservation of peace and order.

4. INCITEMENT TO DISORDER AND SPIES.—A strong warning must be issued to all localities that any person found inciting the workers to attack property or inciting the workers to riot must be dealt with immediately. It should be pointed out that the opponents will in all probability employ persons to act as spies and others to use violent language in order to incite the workers to disorder.

5. TRADE UNION AGREEMENTS.—The General Council further direct that the Executives of the Unions concerned shall definitely declare that in the event of any action being taken and Trade Union agreements being placed in jeopardy, it be definitely agreed that there will be no general re-

sumption of work until those agreements are fully recognised.

6. Procedure.—(*a*) These proposals shall be immediately considered by the Executives of the Trade Unions concerned in the stoppage, who will at once report as to whether they will place their powers in the hands of the General Council and carry out the instructions which the General Council may issue from time to time concerning the necessary action and conduct of the dispute.

(*b*) And, further, that the Executives of all other affiliated Unions are asked to report at once as to whether they will place their powers in the hands of the General Council and carry out the instructions of the General Council from time to time, both regarding the conduct of the dispute and financial assistance.

(Signed) A. Pugh, *Chairman*,
Walter M. Citrine,
Acting Secretary.

D.73.

C.P. MANIFESTO.

(Advertisement in *Sunday Worker*, May 2, 1926).

For nine months the Communist Party has been warning the workers that the mine-owners and their government intended to attack the miners, and through them the whole working class. The Right Wing in the trade unions and the Labour Party has sneered at these warnings, and deliberately neglected to make adequate preparations. The events of the last few days have shown conclusively that the Communist Party was right.

The supreme need of the moment is solidarity between all sections of organised labour. The greatest danger to the workers to-day is that the government and the Right Wing may succeed in isolating the miners from the rest of the movement by obscuring the real issues at stake, namely, that whatever reorganisation of the coal industry is needed, the miners shall not be forced to accept lower wages, longer hours, or district agreements.

During the negotiations the Government has done its utmost to trap the miners into unreservedly accepting the Commission's Report as a basis for discussion, and abandoning their resistance to its unashamed proposals for lowering their standard of life. This would be fatal, not only for the miners, but for all workers. Therefore, every working-class organisation must tell the capitalists plainly that the miners' declaration on wages, hours and national agreements, repeatedly endorsed by the General Council, are the minimum basis of any agreement whatsoever.

Further, the Communist Party reminds the workers that the Government fears action, not words. The General Council's request for power to call out every industry will not move the Government unless the resolution is accompanied by action. Such action can only be an immediate embargo on transport of coal or blacklegs, and a stoppage of the lying capitalist press.

The Communist Party urges every member of the working class to do his utmost, in the next few days, to mobilise the workers in every locality around the Trades Council, vested with full authority as a Council of Action to press for the creation of a Workers' Defence Corps and a commissariat department jointly with the local Co-operative and to demand that the General Council shall immediately summon an International Conference of all trade union organisations to prevent black-legging and secure co-ordinated action in defence of the miners.

NOT A PENNY OFF THE PAY, NOT A SECOND ON THE DAY!

A COUNCIL OF ACTION IN EVERY TOWN!

EVERY MAN BEHIND THE MINERS!

—The Central Committee,
Communist Party of Great Britain.

D.74.

N.U.R. TELEGRAM.

"Executive Committee instruct all our members not to take duty after Monday next, arrangements to be made locally so that all men will finish their term of duty at their home station on Tuesday morning. (Signed) Cramp."—*Times*, May 3, 1926.

D.75.

The following message was issued by Mr. Felix Pole, the general manager of the Great Western Railway, to all stations and departments of the railway :—

"The National Union of Railwaymen have intimated that railwaymen have been asked to strike without notice to-morrow (Monday) night.

Each Great Western man has to decide his course of action ; but I appeal to all of you to hesitate before you break your contracts of service with the old company, before you inflict grave injury upon the railway industry, and before you arouse ill-feeling in the railway service which will take years to remove.

Railway companies and railwaymen have demonstrated that they can settle their disputes by direct negotiations. The mining industry should be advised to do the same.

Remember that your means of living and your personal interests are involved, and that Great Western men are trusted to be loyal to their conditions of service in the same manner as they expect the Company to carry out their obligations and agreements."

D.76.

The Electrical Power Engineers' Association sent to the Government the following resolution, published on May 3 :—

" That in view of the national emergency which has arisen and in the interests of public safety, the Electrical Power Engineers' Association hereby resolves—

(1) That the essential public services in connection with the supply of electrical energy should be maintained ;

(2) The Association deprecates the introduction of volunteer workers in the electricity supply industry, but in the present emergency this Executive Committee agrees that to maintain the essential public services it hereby instructs its members to co-operate in the Government scheme for the maintenance of such services ;

(3) That to prevent a situation arising which may operate to the detriment of the foregoing resolutions, it is advisable for instructions to be given by His Majesty's Government to all electricity supply undertakers, that to maintain the supply of energy for such essential public services care shall be exercised that a supply of power shall not be given to an industrial works engaged in work of a non-essential character ;

(4) That the aforementioned resolutions be officially communicated to His Majesty's Government at the earliest opportunity, and that copies of such resolutions be sent to the National Joint Board and all the District Joint Boards."

D.77.

Deputy Chief Civil Commissioner's Office,
1st May, 1926.

Under the provisions of the Emergency Regulations, 1926, the Board of Trade have made emergency directions governing the distribution and use of fuel in order that available supplies may be conserved. These directions will be administered mainly by Local Authorities.

Amongst the provisions of the directions which most closely affect the public are the following :—

(*a*) Household or Domestic Consumption.—No coal may be supplied or acquired for such consumption when the stocks already in hand exceed five cwts. If the stocks do not exceed five cwts., not more than one cwt. per week may be supplied or acquired. Consumers may be required by the Local Authority to register with a particular coal merchant or dealer.

(*b*) INDUSTRIES AND BUSINESSES (including Factories, Shops, Schools, Offices, etc.)—The weekly consumption, whether from stocks already existing on the premises or otherwise must be restricted to not more than 50 per cent. of the average weekly quantity consumed in the four weeks preceding the 1st May. Provision is made, in cases where an industry or business could not otherwise be carried on, for this restricted maximum consumption to be exceeded for a limited period. This is subject to conditions which must be carefully observed. New supplies cannot be acquired without the written consent of the Local Authority. Full information as to existing stocks of coal and consumption during any specific period must be given to the Local Authority when required.

(*c*) LIGHTS FOR DISPLAY AND ADVERTISEMENTS.—These are prohibited, but lights which, in the opinion of the police, are required for protection of property and public safety may be maintained.

(*d*) GAS AND ELECTRICITY.—All possible economy in the use of gas and electricity must be effected. In order to assist in securing this end, undertakings supplying gas may reduce the pressure of gas at those times of the day when the demand is low, in order to meet the demands when gas is most needed. Gas and electricity for industrial purposes are required to be restricted in the same manner as coal.

Any contravention of the directions is an offence punishable on summary conviction by imprisonment or fine.

This notice is not intended to be an exhaustive summary of the directions, and in any case where consumers are in doubt as to the effect of the directions, they should communicate with the appropriate Local Authority.

Chapter XIII

THE THIRD OF MAY

At 1.5 a.m. it was officially announced from Downing Street that negotiations had finally broken down. The announcement stated that it had come to the Government's knowledge that the General Strike had been called, and that "overt acts had already taken place, including gross interference with the freedom of the press." The Government held that such action involved a challange to constitutional rights and demanded the "immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the instructions for the General Strike." The General Council replied expressing surprise and regret at the Government's ultimatum, and later issued a Manifesto.

On Monday afternoon a debate took place in the House of Commons, in which appeals for resumption of negotiations were refused by the Government. Mr. Baldwin said: "It is not wages that are imperilled; it is the freedom of our very constitution. No man who remains at work shall be prejudicially affected afterwards." The General Strike opened up in sections during the afternoon and night, as shifts ended. All later editions of London evening newspapers were stopped by strike of workers against the character of contents. Messages of support came from the British Empire (India) and from other countries.

All army leave stopped. O.M.S. hand over to the Government.

D.78.

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress issued the following manifesto on the evening of Sunday, May 2:—

The prolonged efforts of the Trades Union Congress General Council and the Miners' Federation have failed to effect a satisfactory settlement of the mining dispute. A situation of the utmost gravity has been produced by the action of the mineowners in locking out more than a million mine workers, and by the failure of the Government to make any acceptable proposals to enable the industry to continue without any further degradation of the standards of life and labour in the coalfields pending re-organisation.

The General Council, with the full approval and co-operation of the accredited representatives of the Trade Unions, has been compelled to organise united resistance to the attempt to enforce a settlement of the mining problem at the expense of the mine workers' wages. At a special conference of Trade Union Executives on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday last, measures were taken by the General Council to bring about a stoppage of work in the transport services, the printing trades, and certain productive industries. Unless a settlement which the representatives of the Trades Union Congress can recommend the miners to accept is reached before midnight on Monday, the workers in these essential industries and services will be withdrawn.

The Trade Unions disclaim all responsibility for the calamity that now threatens. Their action is not directed against the public. Responsibility for the consequences that must inevitably follow a general cessation of work lies with the mineowners and the Government entirely.

No proposals for a national settlement of the mining problem were made by the mineowners until within a few hours of the time fixed for the expiration of the lock-out notices, and after thousands of men had already left the mines under such notices. By their refusal to require a withdrawal of these notices to enable negotiations to continue, except upon the condition that the mine workers agreed in advance to accept wage reductions, the Government made it impossible for the representatives of the Trade Unions to effect an honourable settlement.

Throughout the crisis, and especially in the later stages of negotiations, the Trade Union representatives appealed

strongly to the Government for more time to discuss a possible basis of settlement. The miners' representatives at the same time emphatically declared their willingness to consider any proposals for a national settlement made either by the mineowners or the Government.

All attempts to reach an understanding based on acceptance of the Commission's proposals for the drastic reorganisation of the mining industry were frustrated by the Government's attitude as to free and unfettered discussion thereon. Even now with a general stoppage of transport and productive industry within sight, the Trade Union representatives believe that an honourable settlement can be reached. But it is in their view absolutely essential that the demand of the Government for an undertaking from the miners' leaders to consent in advance of negotiations to a reduction of wages must be withdrawn, and the notices must also be withdrawn to allow negotiations to proceed without the issue being pre-judged.

Having regard to the earnest efforts that have been made and the readiness of the workers' representatives to discuss the report in its entirety, there is no shadow of reason why the miners should be locked out or the grave decision of a general stoppage should be allowed to take effect. If it does, then it must be repeated emphatically that the responsibility will lie with the Government and the mineowners.

D.79.

The following statement was issued by the Council of the O.M.S. on May 3:—

The Council of the O.M.S. desires to make it clear that the whole organisation has now been handed over to the Government, and requests all O.M.S. Committees to place themselves and their registered personnel at the disposal of their local Volunteer Service Committee chairman forthwith.

D.80.

Times, May 4, 1926.

Mrs. Philip Snowdon, speaking yesterday at the annual conference of the National Federation of Christian Workers among

Poor Children, at the Kingsway Hall, referred to the coal dispute, saying that the nation was on the edge of a very grave crisis. She added :—" We must stand quietly behind the Government—any Government, for it would have been the same if a Labour Party had been in power—in all it does to maintain law and order. We must be very careful not to aggravate the position by any words of ours. We hope and pray that under God we may see a very speedy issue out of a very trying and in some respects a menacing situation."

D.81.

Times, May 4, 1926.

UNITY HOUSE TELEGRAM.

" Stoppage appears inevitable. Unless we advise otherwise, every man must act on instructions already given. No trains of any kind must be worked by our members. Acting in full agreement with Associated and Railway Clerks' Unions, you must do likewise in districts. Allow no disorderly or subversive elements to interfere in any way. Maintain perfect order and have confidence in your own representatives. Perfect loyalty will ensure success."

D.82.

Times, May 4, 1926.

NATIONAL JOINT COMMITTEE.

Joint discussions have taken place to-day between the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, the Executive Committee of the Miners' Federation, and the Parliamentary Labour Party, preparatory to the debate in Parliament on the industrial crisis.

The Report presented by the Industrial Committee of the peace efforts which have been made and of the renewed conversations which took place on Saturday and Sunday served to emphasise the grave responsibility the Government has incurred by its unwarranted action in destroying the promising work on which the Industrial Committee was engaged when the Government's ultimatum was received.

The General Council, fully appreciating the gravity of the situation that had been created by the Government's action and still hopeful of carrying on negotiations, made arrangements after leaving Downing Street to continue the work it had in hand. As a result of its deliberations to-day, the Council is satisfied that the basis of a settlement can be reached if negotiations are resumed.

In the joint meeting with the Parliamentary Labour Party, Mr. Macdonald outlined the arrangements which had been decided upon by the Parliamentary Executive for its action in Parliament.

D.83.

Daily Herald, May 3, 1926.

Trust your Leaders.

Never was this more necessary than it is now.

It is indispensable to success. Heed none who speak ill of those in command, who even " hint a doubt or hesitate dislike "—whether they are open enemies or professing friends.

The General Council has warned us against spies, against scoundrels who incite to riot, to attacks on persons or property.

Deal with such pests immediately—whether they are in capitalist pay or are trying to make trouble from another motive.

It is essential that now we cast out all suspicion as well as all fear.

Among the leaders themselves this has been done. All old feuds, all personal bitterness, are forgotten.

Let it be so among the rank and file. If our effort is to be successful it must be so.

Any who try to sow distrust are the worst foes of Labour, worse than any Capitalist.

For the Capitalist can be recognised and fought with. These other foes are in disguise.

If they seek to exert their sinister influence, deal with them, too.

D.84.

Daily Herald, May 3, 1926.

INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY.

" That the National Council of the I.L.P. pledges the support of every member of the Party to the miners. It congratulates the General Council of the T.U.C. on its sustained efforts to secure a reasonable settlement, and upon its decision to mobilise the whole Trade Union Movement behind the miners when the Government and the coal-owners criminally enforced the lock-out. It is the duty of every worker and every decent citizen to support the miners in resisting reduction of wages to a satrvation level.

The miners do essential and dangerous service for the nation, and the nation is honourably bound to see that they are paid a living wage in return.

The National Council of the I.L.P. calls upon its 1100 branches to place themselves unreservedly at the disposal of the miners and the Trade Union Movement in the biggest struggle in which British Labour has ever been engaged.

The development may be momentous, but responsibility does not rest with Labour, and if the consequences are faced with confidence, discipline and courageous leadership, an historic step may be taken towards the abolition of poverty and the freedom of the workers."

D.85.

Daily Herald, May 3, 1926.

T.U.C. AND BROADCASTING.

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress met after the conference on Saturday and completed its arrangements for dealing with the present situation and any developments that will arise.

Certain committees were appointed and preparations made to meet possible contingencies.

> " In view of the fact that the Government is understood to have commandeered the British Broadcasting Company, and in anticipation of the closing down of the Press, the General Council is making arrangements for direct communication with the head offices and branch offices of the affiliated trade unions, and all authoritative statements, reports and announcements will be made directly to them."

The General Council warns the Trade Union and Labour Movement to take no notice of any statement that may be broadcast by wireless or circulated in any other form.

General Secretaries of the trade unions have already been requested to supply the necessary information to enable direct communication to be maintained."

D.86.

Daily Herald, May 4th, 1926.

T.U.C. ORDER OF THE DAY.

The Trade Unions are fighting in defence of the mine-workers. The responsibility for the national crisis lies with the Government.

With the people the Trade Unions have no quarrel. On the contrary, the unions are fighting to maintain the standard of life of the great mass of the people.

The Trade Unions have not entered upon this struggle without counting the cost. They are assured that the trade unionists of the country, realising the justice of the cause they are called upon to support, will stand loyally by their elected leaders until the victory and an honourable peace has been won.

The need now is for Loyalty, Steadfastness and Unity.

The General Council of the Trade Union Congress appeals to the workers to follow the instructions that have been issued by their union leaders.

Let none be disturbed by rumours or be driven by panic to betray the cause.

Violence and disorder must be everywhere avoided, no matter what the incitement.

Stand firm and we shall win.

D.87.

Daily Herald, May 4, 1926.

T.U.C. PREPARES STRIKE MACHINERY.

1. Persons willing to act as dispatch riders are asked to send their names and addresses direct to the General Purposes Committee, Trades Union Congress, 32 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1, and also to the local committee and the Trades Council for their area.

2. Car owners are asked to communicate direct to the General Purposes Committee saying what they can do and whether they can supply a car without a driver or with one.

3. Secretaries of local committees are asked to forward their names and addresses direct to the General Purposes Committee.

It is further requested that supporters should at once report any cases where newspapers continue to be published. Full particulars should be sent to the General Purposes Committee at the above address.

D.88.

Daily Herald, May 4, 1926.

J. R. M. ON THE CRISIS.

" As far as we can see we shall go on. I don't like General Strikes. I haven't changed my opinion. I have said so in the House of Commons. I don't like it; honestly I don't like it; but honestly, what can be done ? "

D.89.

The Netherland Central League of Transport Workers issued on May 3, the following manifesto to all Dutch sailors and transport workers :—

In this conflict we look to you for the fulfilment of your duty of international solidarity, in which connection the following measures must be observed—(1) Not a ton of coal may be exported to England, and all dockers will have carefully to see that this does not take place. Work must be refused on ships attempting to load coal for England and all such attempts must immediately be brought to the notice of the Central League. Sailors must strike in case their ship is taking coal destined for England. (2) All ships that would have been bunkering in English ports, and which now try to fill their bunkers elsewhere, must be refused coal. (3) Enlistment on British ships is forbidden.

Chapter XIV

THE FOURTH OF MAY

(Tuesday—1st Day of General Strike)

The stoppage was complete. There were no negotiations, no evening papers, no passenger trains, and only a few copies of *Hansard*. The organised workers in every trade responded; the unorganised workers in many cases responded also; the unemployed stood fast. A few unions still lagged behind.

Trade Union Congress announces unexpected success of strike call and reports difficulty in keeping workers in. International Federation of Trade Unions (Amsterdam) says it will give moral and financial support if desired. Communist Party issues typewritten *Workers' Bulletin*. Similar Strike Sheets issued by Trades Councils, etc. House of Commons sits for two and a half hours only, discussing (by agreement with Labour Party) non-contentious matter only.

British Broadcasting Company bulletins (under Government control) issued at three hours' interval. Civil Commissioners announce "Everything quiet. Food supplies normal. Volunteering good. Leaders urging men to maintain law and order." Arrest of Stoker (Communist) in Manchester. Arrest of Communist M.P., Saklatvala, for speech on May Day.

D.90.

"The Scotsman" of May 6 contained the announcement:—

There was a prosecution yesterday at Manchester under the Emergency Powers Act Regulations.

William Richard Stoker (40), of Old House Farm, Ringway, stated to be a company director, was sentenced to two months in

the second division for having attempted to do an act calculated to cause disaffection amongst His Majesty's Forces and civilian population, and to impede, delay, or restrict measures essential to the public safety.

It was stated that the police found Stoker's high-powered car outside a Socialist Hall at Openshaw, ready to proceed to Glasgow with 1600 copies of the general strike edition of the *Workers' Daily*, which, the prosecution alleged, Stoker knew contained seditious matter. Notice of appeal was given.

D.91.

T.U.C. COMMUNIQUÉ.

" We have from all over the country, from Lands End to John o' Groats, reports that have surpassed all our expectations. Not only the railwaymen and transport men, but all other trades came out in a manner we did not expect immediately. The difficulty of the General Council has been to keep men in what we might call the second line of defence rather than call them off. There are also no reports other than those of a quiet, orderly and good-tempered desire to keep the peace of all sections of the community."

D.92.

HOLD TIGHT—THAT'S RIGHT.

Congratulations to the workers of Great Britain ! Nothing finer has ever been seen than the completeness of their response to the call of the General Council.

The stoppage is complete. The wanton brutality of the Government and the coal-owners in their combined endeavour to force a reduction of wages upon the already underpaid miners has met solid resistance of the whole class.

And the gallantry of the printing workers in silencing the lying capitalist press with their last-minute lies, made a splendid prelude to the greatest display of solidarity in British history.

All it now needs is for every man to stand fast and the fight is won.

There is of course a danger—and already the Government's policy makes it clear. They build upon the hope that the T.U.C. will be bamboozled into trying to induce (in the interests of peace) the miners into retreating behind their minimum demands.

This the miners cannot and should not do. And no T.U.C. leader can surely even think of such a thing.

The Government forced the war. Let the Government make the " peace " concessions.

This morning's issue of the *Morning Post* utters the inevitable lie that " the Trade Union Congress has upset the entire country and challenged the King's Government."

This is as false as hell. The country has been upset by the

stubborn rapacity of the coal owners and by the decision of the Government to take their side.

This was a direct attack upon the life standards of the whole working class, and in resisting it the T.U.C. did no more than their duty.

The workers are defending their lives.

The boss class and its Government are the challengers.

They have challenged our right to live and we can do no more than accept their challenge.

The Government which has made this criminal bungle should be forced to resign. The Press which seeks to make blacklegging a "service to King and Country" is impudently and arrogantly claiming both Government and Press as the property of the Big Boss Class.

The workers did not strike until they were forced. They will hold fast to the end.

EVERY MAN BEHIND THE MINERS.

NOT A PENNY OFF THE PAY; NOT A MINUTE ON THE DAY.

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL.

NO GOVERNMENT HAS THE RIGHT TO ORDER MEN AND WOMEN TO STARVE.—*Workers' Bulletin*, 4th May, 1926.

Chapter XV

THE FIFTH OF MAY

(Wednesday—2nd Day of General Strike)

Railway transport and shipping paralysed. All London taxi-cab drivers cease work at midnight. The *Times* appears as a single sheet in miniature. National Union of Journalists (Glasgow) decide by 60 votes to 9 not to blackleg. National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement offer their assistance to Trades Councils and Strike Committees and refuse to blackleg.

Government takes over *Morning Post* equipment and, under super-editorship of Mr. Churchill, issues official *British Gazette*. First number contains an article defining the issue as a conflict between the Trade Union leaders and Parliament. In the evening Trades Union Congress takes over *Daily Herald* equipment and produces official strike news bulletin, entitled *The British Worker* (issued after preliminary confiscation by the Police). First number contains special message from General Council, emphasising that the Strike is an industrial dispute and calling for peaceful behaviour The Communist Party, in the *Workers' Bulletin*, issue statement on " The Political Meaning of the General Strike," with the slogans—(1) All together behind the Miners ; (2) Nationalisation of Mines ; (3) Resignation of Baldwin : formation of a Labour Government.

House of Commons discusses Emergency Regulations. Home Secretary appeals to whole population for special Constabulary recruits. Churchill refuses

an audience to Macdonald and Henderson. At Liverpool warships land supplies. A destroyer and a submarine are berthed in the Tyne. The Tyneside (Northern Division) Civil Commissioner approaches the Joint Strike Committee with proposals for joint working. Newcastle City Council (Conservative majority) sends appeal to Premier to end lock-out on basis of status quo.

There are baton charges at Canning Town and Poplar. Non-Union buses are stopped by pickets. Smithfield (London meat market) authority says: "Enough meat in London if only we can get it." Stoker (Manchester Communist) sentenced to two months' imprisonment.

D.93.

British Gazette, May 5, 1926.

Instead of the representatives of the nation duly elected on a franchise almost universal, our rights and destinies would be in the hands of a body of men who, however well-meaning most of them may be, represent only a section of the public and have derived no authority from the people comparable to that of the House of Commons. We must never forget, even in the heat and height of this struggle, that we are all fellow-citizens. But the democratic State cannot possibly submit to sectional dictation. It is bound to defend and assert, no matter at what cost, the national and constitutional authority.

While, therefore, there is plenty of room for negotiation and a spirit of compromise about the coal trade, there can be absolutely none about a General Strike. That is not a dispute between employers and workmen. It is a conflict between the Trade Union leaders and Parliament. And that conflict must only end, and can only end, in the decisive and unmistakable victory of Parliament. This victory his Majesty's Government is definitely resolved to secure.

Ample force to preserve the laws and the life of the nation is at the disposal of the State. But force is not the instrument on which a British Government should rely. We rely on reason, on public opinion, and on the will of the people. In this crisis the organisers of the General Strike have made it their first care to paralyse public opinion by breaking down and muzzling the newspapers on which the whole people have been accustomed to rely for information about what is going on at home and abroad.

DANGER OF RUMOURS.

Nearly all the newspapers have been silenced by violent concerted action. And this great nation, on the whole the strongest community which civilisation can show, is for the moment reduced in this respect to the level of the African natives dependent only on the rumours which are carried from place to place. In a few days, if this were allowed to continue, rumours would poison the air, raise panics and disorders, inflame fears and passions together, and carry us all to depths which no sane man of any party or class would care even to contemplate.

The Government have, therefore, decided not only to use broadcasting for spreading information, but to bring out a paper of their own on a sufficient scale to carry full and timely news throughout all parts of the country.

The "British Gazette" is run without profit on the authority and, if necessary, at the expense of the Government. It begins necessarily on a small scale, and its first issue cannot exceed 700,000 copies. It is proposed, however, to use the unlimited resources of the State, with the assistance of all loyal persons, to raise the circulation day after day until it provides sure and sufficient means of information and a guide for action for all British citizens.

D.94.

The British Worker, May 5, 1926.

MESSAGE TO ALL WORKERS.

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress wishes to emphasise the fact that this is an industrial dispute. It expects every member taking part to be exemplary in his conduct and not to give any opportunity for police interference. The outbreak of any disturbance would be very damaging to the prospects of a successful termination of the dispute.

The Council asks pickets especially to avoid obstruction and to confine themselves strictly to their legitimate duties.

D.95.

The following was issued by the Communist Party:—

FIGHT TO WIN.

THE POLITICAL MEANING OF THE GENERAL STRIKE.

Workers of Britain!

You have begun a General Strike of vast extent in defence of the miners' standard of living, knowing full well that further degradation for the miners means immediate attacks on the wages and hours of other workers. The General Strike is not only a magnificent act of brotherly support to the miners, it is an act of self-defence on the part of the working class, who, with their families, constitute the best majority of the people.

The first watchwords of the General Strike, therefore, have been and remain :—" All together behind the Miners—Not a Penny off the Pay. Not a Second on the Day ! "

But now that the struggle has begun, the workers have it in their power to put an end once for all to this continual menace to their living standards and working conditions. Simply to beat off the employers' present offensive means that they will return to the attack later on, just as they did after Red Friday last year. The only guarantee against the ravenous and soulless greed of the coal-owners is to break their economic power.

THEREFORE LET THE WORKERS ANSWER THE BOSSES' CHALLENGE WITH A CHALLENGE OF THEIR OWN :—" NATIONALISATION OF THE MINES WITHOUT COMPENSATION FOR THE COAL-OWNERS, UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL THROUGH PIT COMMITTEES ! "

The Government in this struggle has dropped the pretence of being above all classes. It made no objection to the coalowners' decision to hold the community to ransom by their attack on wages, but it delivered an insolent and provocative ultimatum when the Trade Union Congress decided, in the exercise of its undoubted rights, to defend the miners against starvation wages and slave conditions. Even since the strike begun, the Government has welcomed the aid of the capitalist strike-breaking organisations, the O.M.S. and Fascisti ; but it issued an insulting rejection of the trade union offer to maintain essential services without blacklegs. Troops, aeroplanes and battle-ships are being used to overawe the workers, if possible, and to crush the General Strike. If the Strike ends, though it be with the defeat of the coal-owners, but with the Government's power unshaken, the capitalists will still have hopes of renewing their attack.

Therefore the third essential slogan of the General Strike must be : " RESIGNATION OF THE FORGERY GOVERNMENT—FORMATION OF A LABOUR GOVERNMENT ! "

The Communist Party continues to instruct its members and to urge the workers to take every practical step necessary to consolidate our positions against the capitalist attack. Such essential steps are :—to form a Council of Action immediately ; to organise able-bodied Trade Unionists in a Workers' Defence Corps against the O.M.S. and Fascisti ; to set up feeding arrangements with the Co-operative Societies, to hold mass meetings and issue strike bulletins, and to make their case known to the soldiers.

But the Communist Party warns the workers against the attempt being made to limit the struggle to its previous character of self-defence against the capitalist offensive. Once the battle has been joined, the only way to victory is to push ahead and hit hard. And the way to hit the capitalist hardest is for the Councils of Action to throw out the clear watchwords :—

NOT A PENNY OFF THE PAY. NOT A SECOND ON THE DAY !

NATIONALISE THE MINES WITHOUT COMPENSATION, UNDER WORKERS' CONTROL !

Formation of a Labour Government!

—The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

D.98.

The British Worker, May 5, 1926.

OFFICIAL T.U.C. STATEMENT

(Given by Mr. Poulton).

"All reports we have had to-day go to show that there is the same solidarity and unanimity as on the first day of the strike.

" The machine is working in a manner that has exceeded our expectations, despite any statements that may be made to the contrary by other parties.

" The Council has increased a number of sub-committees to deal with the general organisation, and it is satisfied, from the evidence to hand, that the machine it has had to set up very rapidly is operating efficiently, and that the men and women who are in the fighting line are standing solidly together.

" We have had a report that the Government has only been able to produce less than half the number of copies of the official newspaper that was originally arranged for.

"As showing the feeling in the country, a resolution has been passed by the Primitive Methodist Hull District Synod appealing to the Government to take temporary control of the working of the coal mines and to proceed to reorganise the coal industry on the lines recommended by the Royal Commission pending a resumption of the negotiations on the basis of such reorganisation.

" The resolution also protests strongly against any proposal to abolish the seven-hour day without the consent of the miners, and affirms the principle of a national minimum wage.

" We have had resolutions from the French Confederation, from the Dutch Federation, the American Federation of Labour, the Canadian Federation and the Irish Labour Movement, and also the International Transport Workers, expressing not only good wishes, but offering to do all they can to bring the matter to a successful issue.

" The Transport Workers abroad have called upon the unions not to shift any coal to England nor to coal vessels which normally would take coal to England. We have had messages from Germany, particularly the mining districts, assuring us that the German workers are behind us.

" The General Council wish to emphasise the fact that in all the instructions they have sent out to the unions on questions of organisation, discipline and finance, it is made clear that this is essentially an industrial dispute.

" The Council have issued very explicit instructions to all trade union members taking part that they must be exemplary in their conduct and give no opportunity for any police interference. They have also issued instructions to the pickets that they must avoid

obstruction and confine themselves strictly to their duties and act in a constitutional manner."

D.97.

THE SECOND LINE.

Replying to questions, Mr. Poulton said there was no official information at present that any new negotiations or conversations were taking place between the T.U.C. and the Government.

So far as the Council were concerned, they had not applied for any credit to the Co-operative Wholesale Society, but local unions might have entered into arrangements.

Nothing had yet been decided as to an extension of the strike or the calling out of the " second line of defence." This meant the unions not included in the first schedule. The matter was at present under consideration.

So far as the electricity supply was concerned, there were difficulties, especially in regard to distribution, and the unions concerned had been asked to formulate a policy in relation to power and light. They had not yet officially arrived at a well-defined policy.

The question of extending the stoppage to the Post Office telegraphs and mails had not yet been officially before the Council. There had never been anything like such a general closing down of the railways as at present existed. There had been wholesale compliance with the Council's order by the three railway unions, and resolutions were pouring into the offices from all quarters giving enthusiastic support to the policy of the Council.

Some of the statements issued by the railway companies were, he declared, mere camouflage.

With regard to any new negotiations, Mr. Poulton said the Government ended the discussion, and the last statement of the General Council was that the door was still open so far as they were concerned.

D.98.

The British Worker, May 5, 1926.

THE NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN.

Unity House,
Euston Road, London, N.W.1,
5th May, 1926.

MINERS' CRISIS.

" Hearty congratulations to our members on their splendid response to the call for action. We are proud to be in the very front line of the workers' battle. You must handle no traffic of any kind, foodstuffs or otherwise. Stand all together for the achievement of victory."

C. T. CRAMP,
National Union of Railwaymen.

D.99.

The British Worker, May 5th, 1926.

MINERS' FEDERATION OF GREAT BRITAIN. MANIFESTO.

Comrades,—The struggle has begun. Menaced with an onslaught on their standard of life by the mineowners and the Government, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain submitted their case to the judgment of their fellow trade unionists.

The General Council and Conference of Trade Union Executives considered it with a full sense of their grave responsibility and pronounced it just beyond all possibility of question.

To-day the whole body of British workers stands united as one man in their unconquerable determination to resist demands which were a calculated and deliberate attack, not only upon the miners, but on every worker in the country and upon the very existence of the Trade Union Movement itself.

MAGNIFICENT LOYALTY.

On behalf of the Miners' Federation we express our heartfelt thanks for the magnificent loyalty with which you, our fellow-workers, have responded to our appeal for aid.

We have laboured for a peaceful settlement, but the Government, not only by its words, but by its actions, has shown only too plainly that peace is not what it desires.

In insisting that the miners should pledge themselves to accept a reduction in wages before even entering negotiations, advanced an unheard of demand which no body of Trade Unionists could accept.

SUNDAY NIGHT'S BREAK.

In suddenly breaking off negotiations with the General Council and the Miners' Federation on Sunday night, it revealed its determination to force upon the Trade Union Movement a struggle for which the Government had long prepared.

It is on the Government, and the Government alone, that the responsibility for the present situation rests.

There is no need for us to call for your assistance, for you have already given it. With you we shall stand firm to the end in defending the rights of the organised workers. With you, we know that justice is on our side. With you, we are confident that the resolute action of a united movement will bring victory to the cause of the workers.

Chapter XVI

THE SIXTH OF MAY

(Thursday—3rd Day of General Strike)

The General Council establishes five Sub-Committees for guidance of the Strike—(1) Transport and Communications; (2) Information; (3) Food Supply; (4) Control and Instructions; (5) Finance. General Council publishes a list of 82 unions whose members are wholly or partly on strike. The unions include 9 mining, 3 railways, 6 other transport, 3 shipping, 21 engineering, 9 iron and steel, 12 building, woodworking and furniture making, 12 printing and paper, 2 distributive, 1 municipal, and 3 general labour.

Reuter declares 40 provincial newspapers are still appearing (the normal total of provincial dailies is 1870).

The Government official report says that in several parts of the country the fleet has given active assistance to the civil power.

The Government made a further promise, assuring all blacklegs that it would take measures to prevent victimisation by trade unions, and that they would lose none of their trade union benefits. Sir John Simon declared in the House of Commons that the strike was illegal. Interim injunction by Justice Asbury against Tower Hill branch of the Seamens' Union. An appeal was made for special constables. Westminster City Council pass resolution upholding the Government. Protest against strike from the Executive of Institute of Journalists, and from Parliamentary branch of N.U.S.

Mr. Baldwin's message broadcasted and printed in *British Gazette*, declared "the General Strike is a challenge to Parliament." The *British Worker* editorial says, "No political issue has ever been mentioned or thought of in connection with the strike. It began over wages and conditions of working; it has never been concerned with anything else. . . . The General Strike is not a 'menace to Parliament,' no attack is being made on constitutional government. We beg Mr. Baldwin to believe that."

The T.U.C. issues message to all workers emphasising that it is an industrial dispute, and issuing a statement with regard to re-opening of discussions, in which they say "No" to the Premier's request for his unconditional withdrawal of the strike notices.

The "Workers' Bulletin," issued by the Communist Party, puts forward the new slogan—"Payment of wages for the period of this strike which has been caused by the employers and government."

Saklatvala sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Headquarters of British Communist Party raided. Numerous collisions between police and strikers in the streets:

In Old Kent Road, London—Crowd dispersed by police, several injured.

In Glasgow—66 arrests, several injured.

In Edinburgh—22 arrests.

D.100.

The following message from the Prime Minister appeared in the *British Gazette* of Thursday May 6:—

Constitutional government is being attacked.

Let all good citizens whose livelihood and labour have thus been put in peril bear with fortitude and patience the hardships with which they have been so suddenly confronted.

Stand behind the Government, who are doing their part confident that you will co-operate in the measures they have undertaken to preserve the liberties and privileges of the people of these islands.

The laws of England are the people's birthright.

The laws are in your keeping.

You have made Parliament their guardian.

The general strike is a challenge to Parliament, and is the road to anarchy and ruin.

STANLEY BALDWIN.

D.101.

The General Council of the Trades Union Congress wishes to emphasise the fact that this is an industrial dispute. It expects every member taking part to be exemplary in his conduct and not to give any opportunity for police interference. The outbreak of any disturbance would be very damaging to the prospects of a successful termination of the dispute.

The Council asks pickets especially to avoid obstruction and to confine themselves strictly to their legitimate duties.

B.B.C., May 6.

D.102.

British Gazette, May 6, 1926.

NOTICE TO PRINTING TRADE.

(OFFICIAL).

When the present General Strike is ended His Majesty's Government will take effectual measures to prevent the victimisation by Trades Unions of any man who remains at work or who may return to work; and no settlement will be agreed to by His Majesty's Government which does not provide for this for a lasting period and for its enforcement, if necessary, by penalties.

No man who does his duty loyally to the country in the present crisis will be left unprotected by the State from subsequent reprisals.

D.103.

British Worker, May 6, 1926.

T.U.C. REPLY TO PREMIER.

Mr. Baldwin, in the House of Commons on Wednesday, said:—

> "No Government in any circumstances could ever yield to a General Strike. The moment it was called off unconditionally the Government were prepared to resume negotiations."

The General Council is ready, at any moment, to resume nego-

tiations for an honourable settlement. It enforces no conditions for resuming preliminary discussion with the Government on any aspects of the case.

It is obvious, however, that at this stage, with no knowledge of the subsequent line of policy that the Government intends to pursue, the General Council cannot comply with the Prime Minister's request for an unconditional withdrawal of the strike notices.

The General Council, it must be remembered, was not responsible for the breakdown of negotiations. The strike was due to the Government's refusal to secure a withdrawal of the lock-out notices in the mining industry, and to its action in provocatively taking the side of the coal-owners and in breaking off negotiations at a time when the General Council was sincerely seeking a peaceful settlement.

The conditions that govern the re-opening of discussions should be different from the conditions governing withdrawal of the notices for the General Strike ; and inasmuch as the Government was responsible for the breaking off of negotiations, any preliminary parlies with a view to discovering a basis upon which the negotiations might be reviewed and the withdrawal of the General Strike notices subsequently considered can only be undertaken in a free and unfettered atmosphere.

The General Council of the T.U.C., while ready at any moment to resume negotiations for an honourable settlement, gives an unqualified " No " to the Premier's request for an unconditional withdrawal of the strike notices.

The Government, it points out, was responsible for breaking off the negotiations, and any further discussions can only be undertaken in a free and unfettered atmosphere.

D.104.

The following resolution was adopted by the Executive of the Institute of Journalists in special session :—

The Institute of Journalists protests against the attempt to extinguish the newspaper Press of the country with its consequent suppression of freedom of opinion and curtailment of the supply of authentic news to the public. The Institute, in this emergency, calls on its members to do all in their power to frustrate this attempt at the earliest possible moment. The Institute congratulates the Parliamentary branch of the National Union of Journalists on their stand for the freedom of the Press.

D.105.

British Gazette, May 6, 1926.

" That this largely attended meeting of the Parliamentary Branch requests the Secretary to send the following telegram to the Executive of the Union (N.U.J.) :

' The Parliamentary Branch protests against the strike instructions given by the Executive, repudiates those instructions and informs the Executive that the Branch has no intention of complying with them.' "

Chapter XVII

THE SEVENTH OF MAY

(Friday—4th Day of General Strike)

Strike still spreading. All electrical stations in London on strike, though some run by strike-breakers. Blast furnaces in the Midlands and some textile works closed down. Steamship communication between Germany and England entirely cut off. London Strike Committee withdraws workers supplying electricity to the House of Commons.

Government licenses pogrom by announcing on the wireless an indemnity to troops for any actions considered necessary to maintain order. The Home Secretary broadcasts appeal for 50,000 special constables to be ready by Monday. Home Office announce "Country quiet generally." War Office state: "Troops have not been called up in aid of civil power, but only certain units have been moved. The spirit of the troops is excellent."

The Archbishop of Canterbury issues proposals for settlement which are printed in *British Worker*, but refused by the *British Gazette* and the British Broadcasting Company.

Macdonald declares, "I am exerting all efforts to assure that every minute should be utilised in endeavouring to secure a peaceful solution of the conflict and to reach an agreement."

According to B.B.C., T.U.C. announce: "Local strike organisations authorised to offer to meet employers immediately and to offer to supply light and power for house, street, shop lighting, social services

and power for food, bakeries, laundries, and domestic purposes."

Local Strike Committees in many places conclude arrangements with Co-operative organisation for feeding the strikers. No general agreements between the General Council and the Co-operative Wholesale Society are made.

On the application of Havelock Wilson, Mr. Justice Lawrence injuncts Liverpool branch of National Sailors' and Firemen's Union from striking before a ballot is taken. (Members were already on strike in many ports).

The *British Worker* is reduced to four pages, owing to the Government requisitioning all paper supplies. It contains a statement that the General Council is ready to resume negotiations at any time. *Workers' Bulletin* criticises *British Worker* for saying this strike raises no political issue.

The All-Russian Trade Union Council notifies the General Council of its contribution of two million roubles.

More collisions with police in many towns, such as Liverpool; in Hull, serious collision, several injured; in London 36 arrests. Isobel Brown (Communist) sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Neither this, nor many succeeding arrests, mentioned in *British Worker*.

D.106.

THE POGROM ANNOUNCEMENT.

The following announcement was made on May 7 by the Government, and broadcast :—

All ranks of the Armed Forces of the Crown are hereby notified that any action which they may find it necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the Civil Power will receive, both now and afterwards, the full support of His Majesty's Government.

D.107.

THE HOME SECRETARY ON THE WIRELESS.

The matter is urgent; the sooner we get a strong, indeed an enormous force, the sooner can I provide protection to individuals, particularly throughout London.

May I say, therefore, I want 50,000 Special Constables by Monday morning. Over 20,000 have already enlisted. Surely there must be another 30,000 men in London willing and eager to serve their country for a few days or even weeks in this crisis. The same appeal applies to every city borough and county throughout the country. Even if things are quiet, I want men to roll up and be sworn in. Even if not used they would afford a steady influence.

It may be that men have a right to withhold their labour, but it is absolutely certain that in a free country men have a right to work if they wish to do so. I do not wish to be an alarmist, but naturally all the attacks on omnibuses, lorries, vans and so forth are reported to me. In the aggregate, the number is small, but the law of England provides that no single man should be molested in the performance of his duties.

B. B. C.

D.108.

THE ARCHBISHOP'S APPEAL.

It was announced on May 8 that, "after full conference with leaders of the Christian Churches in England, the Archbishop of Canterbury desires to make public the following expression of considered opinion":—

Representatives of the Christian Churches in England are convinced that a real settlement will only be achieved in a spirit of fellowship and co-operation for the common good, and not as a result of war.

Realising that the longer the present struggle persists the greater will be the suffering and loss, they earnestly request that all the parties concerned in this dispute will agree to resume negotiations, undeterred by obstacles which have been created by the events of the last few days.

If it should seem to be incumbent on us to suggest a definite line of approach, we would submit as the basis of a possible concordat a return to the *status quo* of Friday last. We cannot but believe in the possibility of a successful issue. Our proposal should be interpreted as involving, simultaneously and concurrently:—

1. The cancellation on the part of the T.U.C. of the General Strike.
2. Renewal by the Government of its offer of assistance to the coal industry for a short, definite period.
3. The withdrawal on the part of the mineowners of the new wages scales recently issued.

D.109.

LABOUR WILL BE SOLID.

According to Baldwin, in the Commons yesterday, the T.U.C. delegates on the eve of the strike were prepared to discuss the following formula drafted by Birkenhead :—" We would urge the miners to authorise us to enter into discussion with the understanding that they accept the report as the basis of a settlement, *and we approach it with the knowledge that it may involve some reduction in wages.*"

Since there has been no repudiation, this statement is probably true. We hope the leaders responsible will now frankly admit that they made a mistake in agreeing even to discuss such an outrageous proposal (knowing the miners' terrible conditions), but will stand solidly by the miners' slogan—NOT A PENNY OFF THE PAY ; NOT A SECOND ON THE DAY.

—*Workers' Bulletin*, May 7.

Chapter XVIII

THE EIGHTH OF MAY

(Saturday—5th Day of General Strike)

Motor cars defended by armoured cars and guards in steel helmets, making a convoy two miles in length, conveyed food from the London docks to the Hyde Park depot.

Mr. Baldwin, in a broadcast speech from the British Broadcast Studio, declared that the General Strike must cease before the Government will renew negotiations. The Government forms a new body, the "Civil Constabulary Reserve," to be composed entirely of ex-soldiers as special auxiliary constables, and to be equipped with steel helmets and truncheons, and to be paid considerably more than the workers in the mines.

The *British Gazette* publishes messages from the Earl of Oxford and Asquith and from Earl Grey of Falloden. Sir John Simon's speech of Thursday night is broadcast. Mr. Havelock Wilson sends message to all masters of ships, to be read to crews. The *Workers' Bulletin* of this day contains articles aimed at stiffening the General Council and warning of workers' feeling against any weakness.

It is reported that 15 Councils of Action are functioning in London. The Battersea Council, of 124 trade union delegates, includes 10 Communists, but its Executive Committee of 7 members include 4 Communists. In Bethnal Green, another district of London, the Council of Action has occupied the Public Library. In London, 15 of the Councils issue daily bulletins (type-script). The London Communist

Party organ (type-script), the *Workers' Bulletin*, has a circulation of 15,000. Total circulation of Communist papers (type-script) in England reckoned at 100,000.

International Miners' Federation and International Transport Workers' Federation hold conferences in Ostend. Measures for support of Miners discussed.

Amsterdam Trade Union International reported to have sent £1000 as first contribution for assistance.

More collisions between police and strikers in various parts of the country; riots at Glasgow, Hull, and Middlesborough; baton charges at Newcastle and Preston. Chief Civil Commissioner announces many arrests. Special message from Prime Minister guaranteeing protection for blacklegs. Home Office report states: "The Communist Party continues to circulate false reports with a view to creating alarm. Their Headquarters at Birmingham were raided last night and a number of persons who were printing a paper, called the *Birmingham Worker*, were arrested."

Arrest of the London Communist Party organiser, Robson, and of Springhall (member of the Y.C.L. Executive).

D.110.

The British Consul General, Rotterdam, reports that the Central Union of Transport Workers there have issued a Proclamation calling upon transport workers and seamen to prevent the loading of coal on ships bound for England, and to prevent the bunkering of ships which would have coaled in this country but for the strike. The Consul General doubts whether full effect will be given to this Proclamation.

B. B. C.

D.111.

THE CONVOY.

B.B.C. Bulletin, May 9, 1926.

The London Docks were opened yesterday morning by a convoy of flour-laden lorries, and convoyed to Hyde Park, whence their

contents were distributed to the districts where supplies were shortest. The convoy of 104 lorries with its escort of 16 armoured cars, cavalry and mounted police, extended for some two miles, and was received everywhere with the greatest astonishment and enthusiasm. Two battalions of Guards had on Friday morning been marched down to take possession of the Docks, and on Friday evening 500 volunteers had gone to the Docks by another route. The Guards and volunteers were looked after by the Port of London Authority, and were ready to help load the flour on the lorries by 8 o'clock on Saturday morning.

All arrangements worked without a hitch, and about 11.30 the great convoy started under escort. There was no attempt whatever at interference, and as the news of its progress spread, large crowds of people—many of them women—collected to cheer and welcome the flour on its way. The sight was as popular as a Lord Mayor's procession.

D.112.

THE PREMIER BROADCASTS.

The British Gazette, May 10th, 1926.

Mr. Baldwin, The Prime Minister, on Saturday evening, broadcast the following message to the Nation :—

" The General Strike has now been in progress for nearly a week, and I think it is right that as Prime Minister I should tell the nation once more what is at stake in the lamentable struggle that is going on.

There are two distinct issues—the stoppage in the coal industry and the General Strike. The stoppage in the coal industry has followed nine months' enquiry and negotiations. I did my utmost to secure agreement upon the basis of the Commission's report and when the time comes, as I hope it soon may, to discuss the terms upon which the coal industry is to be carried on, I shall continue my efforts to see that in any settlement justice is done both to the miners and the owners.

What, then, is the issue for which the Government is fighting ? It is fighting because, while negotiations were still in progress, the Trade Union Council ordered a General Strike, presumably to try to force Parliament and the Community to bend to its will.

With that object, the Trade Union Council has decreed that the railways shall not run, that transport shall not move, that the unloading of ships shall stop, and that no news shall reach the public. The supply of electricity and the transportation of food supplies to the people has been interrupted. The Trade Union Council declared that this is merely an industrial dispute, but their method of helping the miners is to attack the community. Can there be a more direct attack upon the community than that a body not elected by the voters of the country, without consulting the people, without consulting even the Trade Unionist, and in order to impose

conditions never yet defined, should dislocate the life of the nation and try to starve us into submission.

The Mining Dispute.

Who is attacking the standard of living of the nation? Is it the Government, who have only sought to bring about a reasonable settlement of the mining dispute, or the Trade Union Council, who have decreed a strike, which, if continued, cannot fail to increase unemployment, add to the burden of rates and taxes and lower the whole standard of life of the people.

I wish to make it as clear as I can that the Government is not fighting to lower the standard of living of the miners or of any other section of the workers. That suggestion is being spread abroad; it is not true. I do not believe that any honest person can doubt that my whole desire is to maintain the standard of living of every worker, and that I am ready to press the employers to make a sacrifice to the end consistent with keeping the industry itself in working order. But there are many people who say, 'I do not hold with a General Strike, but I feel a good deal of sympathy with the miners.' So do I. But after Parliament had voted £23,000,000 in aid of the mining industry and had received the report of an able Commission, what else could it do than try to bring about a settlement on the basis of what that Commission declares is the only condition upon which the industry can be kept in existence? I want to repeat, therefore, that the Government is prepared to accept a Report, and the whole Report, if other parties will do so.

Government's Duty.

I have said, and I repeat it now, that the Government will take whatever steps are practicable to carry out reorganisation proposals in the report. The Government remain convinced that these steps are an essential factor in getting the industry on an economic basis so that the country may be preserved from a repetition of the serious dispute in the coal trade. We are prepared, as soon as circumstances permit, to consult with the owners and the miners, to see in what way effect can best be given to this policy, and the country may rest assured that when the time comes the Government will be ready with proposals.

We are being asked, "Is the Government taking the position that it will not negotiate?" The answer to this question was given in the statement made on behalf of the Government in the House of Commons on Monday last as follows:—

> "Anyone can approach the Government who has authority and can parley with them, and it is our duty to parley with them, but the Trade Union Congress have only to cancel the General Strike and withdraw the challenge they have issued and we shall immediately begin with the utmost care and patience with them again the long, laborious task which has been pursued over those many weeks of

endeavouring to rebuild on economic foundations the prosperity of the coal trade."

This is our position. No door is closed, but on the other hand, while the situation remains what it is, we have no alternative whatever but to go forward unflinchingly and do our duty.

A Man of Peace.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding the dislocation of transport and of fuel supplies, I hope employers will do all in their power to keep their works running in order to mitigate the hardships which must necessarily fall upon the people in an emergency such as this. This is the Government position—the General Strike must be called off absolutely and without reserve. The mining industry dispute can then be settled. This is a fair arrangement, and it would be a thousand times better to accept it than continue a struggle which can only increase misery and disaster the longer it lasts. A solution is within the grasp of the nation the instant that the Trade Union leaders are willing to abandon the General Strike.

I am a man of peace. I am longing and working and praying for peace, but I will not surrender the safety and the security of the British Constitution. You placed me in power 18 months ago by the largest majority accorded to any Party for many years. Have I done anything to forfeit that confidence ? Cannot you trust me to ensure a square deal, to secure even justice between man and man ?

D.113.

THE CIVIL CONSTABULARY RESERVE.

The following was issued in London by the Deputy Civil Commissioner on behalf of the Government on Saturday, May 8, and similar notices appeared in the provinces within a few days :—

Appeal by the Government for a Civil Constabulary Force.

(1) There are at present two forces attached to the police in London called the Metropolitan Special Constabulary Reserve and the Metropolitan Special Emergency Constabulary, composed of patriotic citizens who are willing to give such time as they can spare to helping the police in their duty of keeping order and protecting the public. There are in these forces at present about 25,000 citizens. Owing, however, to the tactics employed by ill-disposed persons who are taking advantage of the present crisis to interfere with the rights of the community, it has become necessary to expand and to organise a further force of loyal citizens who are able and willing to give their full time towards helping the Metropolitan and City Police. This new force will be designated " The Civil Constabulary Reserve," and will be a paid, whole-time force of sworn-in special constables, organised in units, wearing plain clothes, but supplied with armlets, steel helmets and truncheons.

(2) The following will be eligible to join :—

(*a*) Officers and other ranks of the Territorial Army and the senior contingent of the Officers' Training Corps, including

those already serving as Special Constables, as soon as the services of the latter can be spared.

(*b*) Ex-military men who can be vouched for at Territorial Army Unit Headquarters. Age limit, 50 years.

N.B.—Men engaged in vital public services should remain in their present employment.

(3) Pay will be at the following daily rates :—Commander, 10/- ; Inspector, 7/6 ; Sergeant, 6/- ; Constable, 5/-. An allowance of 5/- a week will be given to each man to cover clothing, washing and incidentals. Army rations will be provided free, and also accommodation. Until such time as rations can be issued a subsistence allowance of 2/6 a day will be given to each man.

(4) In case of injury, personnel will be dealt with under the "Special Constables' Order."

(5) Units of the Civil Constabulary Reserve will be so organised that members of the same Territorial Army unit who enrol for service will serve together and under their own officers. In this time of real emergency, employers are earnestly requested to encourage and give every facility to their employees to enrol themselves.

(6) Recruiting Offices for the Civil Constabulary Reserve will be established on Monday, May 10th, 1926, at 7 a.m., in all drill halls of the City of London and County of London Associations. Full details will be explained to intending recruits who should bring with them, if they possess them, their health and unemployment books or cards.

D.114.

British Gazette, May 8th, 1926.

From Pronouncement by Lord GREY of Falloden.

The General Strike has raised an issue in which the question of miners' wages is submerged. The issue now is not what the wages of miners should be, but whether democratic Parliamentary Government is to be overthrown. It is by this democratic Government that liberty has been won and by this alone can it be maintained.

The alternatives are Fascism or Communism. Both of these are hostile and fatal to liberty. Neither of them allow a free press, free speech, or freedom of action, not even the freedom to strike. It may well be that the majority of those who decreed the General Strike did not intend, and do not desire, to overthrow Parliamentary Government, but their action has threatened it, and the issue must now be decided in favour of free Constitutional Government before any other question can be dealt with.

D.115.

The following special message from Mr. Havelock Wilson, General Secretary of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, was sent to the masters of all ships in the British Mercantile Marine :—

"Please read the following message to your crew :—Unauthorised

persons are calling seamen out on strike—they say on instructions from the T.U.C. They have no authority to do so. The Council of your Union is the only body who has power to do so, and then only after members of the Union have balloted. I am out for the rights of the seamen who decide such questions as strikes for themselves. The ballot has not yet been completed because of the difficulties of the postal services. I hope to have the ballot completed on Thursday or Friday of next week. If the ballot is declared in favour of a strike, it is my duty to inform you that the Courts of Law will declare that no strike money can be paid from Union funds for sympathetic strikes. It would be helpful if you would cable whether crew of your ship endorse my views of ballot before strike."

D.116.

Over the signature of the Earl of Oxford and Asquith, the *British Gazette* of Saturday, May 8, published the following message :

There could be no greater misunderstanding of the attitude of our people at this moment than to suppose that it implies any hostility to the right of combination in industry. Strikes and lock-outs, though they always inflict a certain amount of inconvenience on the public, may be, and often are, in the last resort, justifiable and even necessary.

But the challenge which has now been thrown down and taken up is of a totally different kind. A general strike, such as that which it is being sought to enforce, is directly aimed at the daily life of the whole community.

The people who suffer the least from it are the capitalists and the plutocrats. They have at their command the whole apparatus of opulence, and the petty discomforts to which they are exposed are not more than pinpricks, easily endured, rapidly forgotten.

The real victims of a general strike are what is called the common people—the men and women who have to labour hard, day by day, for their own livelihood, and that of their children, for whom cheap and regular transport between their homes and their work is a prime necessity, and to whom any contraction in the supply or rise in the cost of the necessaries and simpler comforts of life means privation and even want. It is they who in the long run bear the burden and pay the price.

We should have lost all sense of self-respect if we were to allow any section of the community, at its own will, and for whatever motives, to bring to a standstill the industrial and social life of the whole nation. It would be to acquiesce in the substitution for free Government of a dictatorship.

This the British people will never do. We desire at the earliest moment the resumption of negotiations to bring peace and reconstruction to our coal-fields. But the anti-social weapon which has been so unadvisedly drawn must first be sheathed.

D.117.

SOVIET TRADE UNION HELP DECLINED.

The *British Worker* (May 8) stated : " The report in the foreign press yesterday that an offer had been made by the Russian Trade Unions was confirmed this morning by a definite contribution being offered to the General Council. The Council has informed the Russian Trade Unions, in a courteous communication, that they are unable to accept the offer and the cheque has been returned."

D.118.

Workers' Bulletin, May 8.

CONSTITUTIONAL.

The anxiety of the *British Worker* to assure everybody that the strike is a " purely industrial dispute " is almost pathetic.

So far as the intentions of the General Council went, the statement is true enough, but the Government every hour make more of a political issue of it.

Their seizure of the stocks of printing paper is not only evidence that they are driven to extremity, but evidence also, that under E.P.A. the " Constitution " is just what the Government chose to make it.

Already there have been, on official showing, over a hundred arrests, and raids and arrests are reported hourly—so also with the movement of troops. . . . . .

. . . Let the General Council not only demand Nationalisation of the Mines (without compensation and with workers' control), but the resignation of the Government which has made this hideous bungle and the formation of a Labour Government to straighten out the mess.

D.119.

Workers' Bulletin, May 8, 1926.

A STRAIGHT ROAD TO VICTORY.

We welcome the statement of the General Council (given in the latest *British Worker*) that any preliminary discussions into which the Government may enter with the T.U.C. must be " free from any conditions."

This means more than they will attempt to call off the strike to enable negotiations to be resumed. It means that there will be nothing more in the nature of that incredible proposal to take the Commission Report as basis, knowing that this " may involve a reduction of wages."

The Workers of Britain are solid as a wall on one thing—the miners shall suffer Not a Penny Off, Not a Second On, and there shall be no District Settlements. On that point, the workers are adamant. Any leader who attempts to give way on those

points will divert the whole force of workers' solidarity against themselves.

We warn the General Council that the workers were profoundly alarmed at the news that this formula had ever been proposed for discussion. THERE MUST, AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE OF IT.

The workers are out to win and win they will. Even now it is a hard job to keep back the men left in. The whole class is solid and the General Council must lead—to victory.

They must declare themselves boldly and at once.

D.120.

The British Gazette, May 10, 1926.

Every man who does his duty by the country and remains at work or returns to work during the present crisis will be protected by the State from loss of Trade Union benefits, superannuation allowances, or pension. His Majesty's Government will take whatever steps are necessary in Parliament or otherwise for this purpose.—STANLEY BALDWIN.

The following notice had appeared in the *British Gazette* of Thursday, May 6 :—

When the present General Strike is ended, His Majesty's Government will take effectual measures to prevent the victimisation by Trade Unions of any man who remains at work or who may return to work, and no settlement will be agreed to by His Majesty's Government which does not provide for this for a lasting period, and for its enforcement, if necessary, by penalties.

No man who does his duty loyally to the country in the present crisis will be left unprotected by the State from subsequent reprisals.

D.121.

B.B.C. ITEMS, May 8.

Middlesbrough. At 9 p.m., Thursday night, a train at a main line crossing in the middle of the town was stopped by a crowd who invaded the station and blocked the line with heavy wagons. The bus terminus was also invaded and the windows of a bus broken. At midnight about 200 people raided the Goods Station. Order was restored by the police.

. . . . . .

Reports from all sources this morning indicate that the state of the country generally is satisfactory. Such disturbances as are reported are the work of isolated hooliganism and have no political significance. The services of food, transport and protection essential to the continuation of the life of the community are being maintained and developed. All the newspapers that appeared this morning, including the *British Worker*, publish strong appeals against violence.

Chapter XIX

THE NINTH OF MAY

(Sunday—6th Day of General Strike)

The *British Worker* issues a reply of the General Council to the speech broadcast by Baldwin. It says that the General Council is ready to renew negotiations at the point at which they were broken off. The General Council denies that it in any way is threatening the food supply of the population or that it has in any respect broken the constitution.

Purcell (leader of Strike Organisation Committee) at a meeting declares that the Government has issued warrants for the arrest of himself and of Ernest Bevin (Secretary of Transport Workers' Union and member of General Council). It is stated in *Lansbury's Weekly* (May 22) that the Government decided to arrest the members of the General Council and of local strike committees, to call up the Army Reserve, and to repeal the Trade Disputes Act.

International Transport and Mining Federations at Ostend resolve to prevent the export of coal to Britain and bunkering of ships. No number of the *Workers' Bulletin* appeared Saturday, May 8, or Sunday, May 9.

At High Mass this day, Cardinal Bourne declared the General Strike to be a sin against God.

Mr. J. H. Thomas, speaking at Hammersmith, said: "I have never disguised that I did not favour the principle of a General Strike."

On this day the Premier visited the Zoo.

D.121.

The British Worker, May 9th, 1926.

The workers must not be misled by Mr. Baldwin's renewed attempt last night to represent the present strike as a political issue.

The trade unions are fighting for one thing, and one thing only—to protect the miners' standard of life.

The General Council never broke off negotiations. This was done by the Cabinet upon an isolated and unauthorised incident at a most promising stage of the discussion.

The General Council is prepared at any moment to resume those negotiations where they have left off. It has been urged to do so by the united Churches of the country, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. But this appeal was withheld from the nation by the Broadcasting Company. Why?

The Prime Minister pleads for justice. He can get justice by going back to the Friday before the mineowners' lockout notices took effect and recreating the atmosphere of hope which then prevailed.

He complains of the economic loss to the country caused by the strike. Resumption of negotiations would end that loss which, by now, must reach far larger proportions than were involved in meeting the miners' demand that they be informed what reorganisation of the industry meant BEFORE they considered revision of the wages.

The General Council has never closed any door that might be kept open for negotiation. It has done nothing to imperil the food supplies; on the contrary, its members were instructed to co-operate with the Government in maintaining them. No notice has been taken of this offer.

The Prime Minister pleads for peace, but insists that the General Council is challenging the Constitution. That is untrue.

The General Council does not challenge one rule, law, or custom of the Constitution; it asks only that the miners be safeguarded. In the words of the Report itself, no revision of wages should be made until there is

> "acceptance by all parties of such measures of reorganisation as will secure to the industry a new lease of prosperity leading to higher wages."

And again:

> "Before any sacrifices are asked from those engaged in the industry, it shall be definitely agreed between them that all practicable means for improving its (the mining industry) organisation and increasing its efficiency should be adopted, as speedily as the circumstances in each case allow."

The Prime Minister knows this, since every Trade Union leader who has taken part in the negotiations has insisted upon it. If Mr. Baldwin wants to prove, as he says he does, his zeal for the community, let him, instead of talking about fights to a finish, get back to the one path by which, in his own words, we can "secure even justice between man and man."

D.122.

CARDINAL BOURNE.

At High Mass in Westminster Cathedral on Sunday, May 9, Cardinal Bourne made the following declaration :—

The time through which we are passing is of an exceptional character, and the present strike is of a nature quite unlike any others which have preceded it.

It is necessary that Catholics should have before their minds the moral principles which are involved :—

1. There is no moral justification for a general strike of this character. It is a direct challenge to lawfully constituted authority, and inflicts, without adequate reason, immense discomfort and injury on millions of our fellow-countrymen.

It is therefore a sin against the obedience which we owe to God, who is the source of that authority, and against the charity and brotherly love which are due to our brethren.

2. All are bound to uphold and assist the Government, which is the lawfully constituted authority of the country, and represents, therefore, in its own appointed sphere the authority of God Himself.

3. As God alone can guide both rulers and ruled to wise and successful understanding, it is the duty of all to pray earnestly and constantly for His guidance that the day may be hastened when these unhappy conflicts shall terminate in a just and lasting peace.

Chapter XX

THE TENTH OF MAY

(Monday—7th Day of General Strike)

Sir Herbert Samuel approached the General Council. It is announced that "the Government machine is now working smoothly"; that the United Kingdom Sea Pilots' Association support the Government; that in Lancashire a large number of cotton factories are closed down owing to lack of fuel; and in Paisley 32,000 textile workers are on strike.

Negotiations proceeding between the General Council and the Co-operative Wholesale Society for credits to the Trade Union movement.

B.B.C. announcements of arrests and imprisonments of from three to six months. The *British Worker* reports 374 arrests in the past few days. Arrest of Noah Ablett, member of the Executive of the Miners' Federation. Springhall, member of the Young Communist League Executive, sentenced to two months; Robson, Communist Party Organiser, to six weeks. In Birmingham, six Communists arrested for publishing a strike bulletin. Glasgow arrests number over 200.

General Council's message: "All is Well" issued. Five per cent. levy for all trade unionists still working required by the General Council.

All India Trade Union Congress has cabled a further sum of £300 in addition to £200 cabled on Friday to the T.U.C.

Workers' Bulletin, May 10, says: "the refusal of Russian workers' help is a blow at the wives and children of British workers and a wanton insult to the Russian workers."

D.123.

The British Worker, May 10th, 1926.

ALL'S WELL.

The General Council's Message to Trade Union Members.

We are entering upon the second week of the general stoppage in support of the mine workers against the attack upon their standard of life by the coalowners.

Nothing could be more wonderful than the magnificent response of millions of workers to the call of their leaders.

From every town and city in the country reports are pouring into the General Council headquarters stating that all ranks are solid, that the working men and women are resolute in their determination to resist the unjust attack upon the mining community.

The General Council desire to express their keen appreciation of the loyalty of the Trade Union members to whom the call was issued and by whom such a splendid response has been made.

They are especially desirous of commending the workers on their strict obedience to the instruction to avoid all conflict and to conduct themselves in an orderly manner. Their behaviour during the first week of the stoppage is a great example to the whole world.

The General Council's message at the opening of the second week is :—" Stand Firm. Be Loyal to Instructions and Trust your Leaders."

D.124.

LORD BALFOUR'S STATEMENT.

In the *British Gazette*, Lord Balfour issues a statement beginning : " Two hundred and thirty-eight years have passed since a revolution occurred in this country, whose object was to secure supremacy of Parliamentary Government and the traditional liberties of our people. Through eight generations it has proved successful. But we are now threatened it seems with a revolution of a very different kind. . . . . An attempted revolution, were it to succeed, the community would thenceforth be ruled, not by Parliament, not by the Parliamentary Labour Party, not by the rank and file of the Trade Unions, not by the moderate members of the Trades Union Council, but by a relatively small body of extremists who regard trade unions not as the machinery for collective bargaining within our industrial system, but as a political instrument by which the industrial system itself is to be utterly destroyed."

Chapter XXI

THE ELEVENTH OF MAY

(Tuesday—8th Day of General Strike)

General Council issues Strike-Order to take effect from midnight to all Engineering and Shipbuilding workers not yet affected by the strike.

Daily Mail issues a leaflet and a leading article calling for the arrest of the members of the General Council.

Federation of British Industries reports that in Leeds and Nottingham half the textile works, and in Bradford the chief dye-works, are closed down.

Trial of persons arrested in Glasgow proceeding before three special tribunals. One hundred persons sentenced to three months' imprisonment. In Hull, 25 persons sentenced to 3-9 months. Marjory Pollitt (wife of Harry Pollitt) arrested for publication of the *Workers' Bulletin*. Government unable to find place of issue of the Communist *Workers' Bulletin*.

Reported that in provinces 200,000, and in London 40,000 police volunteers registered.

The High Court of Justice, as a result of an application by Havelock Wilson, President of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, to restrain the branches of the union from paying strike pay to their members, issues decision that the strike is illegal.

Arrests and sentences continue. Use of mobile police force. Communist's arrests frequently specified. B.B.C. says in the afternoon of Tuesday: "Still no sign of a relaxation of the strike situation as a whole."

Noah Ablett bound over. Birmingham magistrate prosecuted.

B.B.C. announce: "There is as yet little sign of a general collapse of the strike."

Sir John Simon in the House of Commons announces his Peace move.

Baldwin, in press interview, declares that "vital services" are being successfully carried on, distinguishes between the miners' lockout—an economic strike—and the general strike—an attempt to paralyse the life of the country and claims that the latter has completely failed. In *British Worker*, Pugh issues a denial (in reply to Sir Douglas Hogg) that the General Council, in critical period just before the strike, was ready to discuss question of decrease in miners' wages.

Cook declares, after an all-day session of Miners' E.C., that all districts are against any compromise on hours and wages. He declares that any negotiations must at least lead to the position as it was before the lockout.

Following on rumours that Sir Herbert Samuel (Chairman of Coal Commission) had offered his services for mediation, the *Times* began a leader: "There need be no differences of opinion about the value of the conversations—informal and unofficial, but none the less important—which have been taking place since the return of Sir Herbert Samuel on the future of the coal-mining industry."

A memorandum is handed to the General Council by Sir H. Samuel.. After consideration it unanimously decides to accept it and to call off the General Strike. The General Council, after accepting memorandum, handed it to the Miners' Executive, who rejected it and passed a resolution regretting they had not been consulted, and pointing out that the Memorandum

meant reduction in wages, which was what the General Strike was declared against.

D.125.

NOTICE FROM THE TRANSPORT & GENERAL WORKERS' UNION

(published in the *British Worker* for May 11).

Message from the Executive Council and Officers to our members :
The might of the Governments cannot defeat men who are in the right.
Remain calm and undaunted.
Do not be provoked to disorder.
Our passive resistance is invincible.
We shall continue steadfast in our stand for justice and right
Hold fast. We must see the Miners through.

(Signed) H. GOSLING.
ERNEST BEVIN.

D.126.

STATEMENT BY MR. COOK.

" The Miners' Federation Executive has reviewed the position in the light of messages received from all over the coalfields appealing to the Executive to stand firm against any compromise on either hours, wages or a national agreement. On behalf of the Executive, I desire to inform the miners and the general public that we are as firm to-day as we were when the miners decided unanimously, after the question had been referred to every district, that there were to be no reductions in wages. In the words of the President, Mr. Herbert Smith, " we have nought to give."—*Times*, May 12.

D.127.

RESOLUTION :—M.F.G.B. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

" The E.C. of the M.F.G.B. has carefully considered the proposals elaborated by the Negotiating Committee of the General Council, and approved by the General Council itself, and which represents, in its word, the best conditions which can be obtained for the settlement of the present crisis in the coal industry. The E.C. of the M.F.G.B. expresses its regret that no opportunity was afforded to the representatives of the M.F.G.B. by the General Council to take part in the working out of this project and in the discussion which apparently preceded its elaboration. The proposals of the Negotiating Committee would even on the best case call for a reduction in the wages of a large number of miners, which is contrary to the repeated declaration of the Miners' Federation ; the M.F.G.B.,

moreover, recalls that it was exactly on this issue that the General Council helped them in their struggle by the declaration of a General Strike. In view of this, the M.F.G.B., while cognisant of the seriousness of the consequences which may ensue from its decision, all the same regret that they are compelled to reject the proposal put before them. Moreover, if such proposals are put before the M.F.G.B. as a reason for calling off the General Strike, then the General Council must take this latter step exclusively on its own responsibility."

D.128.

ASTBURY OBITER DICTUM.

The following are extracts from the report given in " The Scotsman " of Wednesday, May 12 :—

Mr. Justice Astbury, in the Chancery Division, London, yesterday, again had before him the motion by the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland for an injunction against the secretaries and other officials of certain branches of the Union to restrain them calling on their members to strike or to leave their employment without the authority of the Executive Council, and contrary to the rules of the Union.

His Lordship, giving his decision, said a serious crisis had arisen in the country in regard to the dispute in the mining industry, and the General Council of the Trade Union Congress had assumed control of the dispute, and had called on their affiliated Unions to cease work if required by the General Council. The General Council had called a so-called general strike, and the defendants had explained the nature of that strike. Large numbers of Unionists throughout the country, of railways, transport, and other trades, had been called upon by the Trade Union Council to come out on strike. The defendants intended to take instructions from the Trade Union Council and not from the Executive Council of their own Union in relation to the matter in question. The branch passed a resolution endorsing the action of the T.U.C. in calling a general strike. It was evident from the facts which had been stated that members of the plaintiff Union had been placed in a position of doubt and danger, and it was his duty to state their rights and those of their Union. The defendants had very fairly admitted that they desired that the members of their Union should be told their rights in the unfortunate circumstances that had arisen.

The so-called general strike called by the T.U.C. Committee is illegal, said his Lordship, and contrary to law, and those persons inciting or taking part in it are not protected by the Trade Disputes Act of 1906. No trade dispute has been alleged or shown to exist in any of the Unions affected, except in the miners' case, and no trade dispute does or can exist between the Trade Union Congress on the one hand and the Government and the nation on the other. The orders of the Trade Union Congress are therefore unlawful, and

the defendants are at law acting illegally in obeying them, and can be restrained by their Union from doing so.

The plaintiffs' counsel has contended that if the members of plaintiff Union staying in their jobs refuse to strike they cannot be deprived of their Union benefits, and the defendants have stated very properly that it is important to them that the members should know their rights in this respect. The law upon that matter is as follows :—

No member of the plaintiff Union or any other Trade Union in this country can lose his Trade Union benefits by refusing to obey unlawful orders, and the orders of the Trade Union Council and the Unions who are acting in obedience thereto in bringing about the so-called general strike are unlawful orders, and the plaintiff Union is entitled to have this fact made clear and brought to the attention of its members.

Mr. Luxmoore had said that those members who obeyed the order to strike would not be entitled during the continuance of the strike to receive any strike pay, and the defendants have again very properly and very fairly stated that it is their desire that they and their members should know their rights in this respect.

Trade Union funds in this country are held in a fiduciary capacity, and cannot legally be used for or depleted by paying strike pay to any member who illegally ceases to work and breaks his contract without justification in pursuance of orders which are unlawful, and this fact also is one that the plaintiff Union is entitled and bound to make clear to its members in the difficult position in which they have been placed.

With regard to the second ground upon which the plaintiff Union seeks to obtain this injunction, the matter is beyond question. The defendants, in addition to acting in defiance of the law, have acted contrary to the rules and orders of their own Union and are also liable on this ground at the suit of that Union to be restrained by injunction from continuing to do so.

Chapter XXII

THE TWELFTH OF MAY

(Wednesday—9th Day of General Strike)

B.B.C. 10 a.m. Bulletin begins as follows :—" Home Office reports from all parts of the country this morning indicate that the position yesterday was quieter than on any previous day of the strike. The Government's energetic protective methods, prompt and severe, police court action, and the restraining influence of responsible Trade Union leaders have effectively suppressed tendencies to rowdyism. There have been more defections from the ranks of the strikers, but the position as a whole is still one of deadlock."

New decree published under the Emergency Powers Act empowering the Government to confiscate money sent from abroad for the strike. All the morning papers strongly emphasise the significance of the decision declaring the General Strike illegal. It is here and there stated that the decision has strongly influenced many members of the General Council, who fear the Government will confiscate trade union funds. General Council issues a denial that it had called out Engineers and Shipbuilders.

More than 80 miners arrested in the Doncaster coal region as a result of collision with police. Police dispersed crowds in Poplar—12 injured. At mid-day official Government radio message declares that " General Strike ceases to-day." Immediately on publication of order by General Council for cessation of General Strike, Cook declared that M.F.G.B. discussed

the position this morning (another report stated that General Council members had visited the M.F.G.B. and had *insisted* that they should revise that position) and had decided to adhere to its previous position and sent a telegram to all districts saying there shall be no resumption of work without decision of National Delegate Conference.

C.P.G.B. sent telegram to all parts of the country emphasising the following points :—

(1) General Council, in spite of previous promises and of unanimous demand of workers, has ceased the struggle against lower wages without receiving any kind of guarantee from Government.

(2) This is treachery not only in relation to miners but to all workers, and in the first place the railwaymen and transport workers.

(3) While the Right Wing of the General Council and Labour Party has exhibited utmost energy, Left Wing has tolerated defeatist agitation and not protested against this treacherous decision.

(4) When the leaders fail, the workers must take things into their own hands.

The Communist Party then put forward the following slogans :—Refuse to return to work. Reject the Samuel Memorandum. Affirm your solidarity with the miners. No wage reduction. No lengthening of hours.

The General Council of the T.U.C. arrived at Downing Street at 12 noon and informed the Prime Minister that " the General Strike is being terminated to-day." Mr. Baldwin made a brief reply, and the news was broadcast at 1 p.m. The King issued a message urging co-operation and amity.

Government official communiqué published saying

that they will not compel employers to take back workers who have participated in the strike and that the Government has not taken on itself any such obligation. In some cases, it continues, dismissals of workers will be inevitable in view of the decrease of production caused by the strike and in view of obligations incurred by employers in regard to volunteer labour.

D.129.

ORDER IN COUNCIL FURTHER AMENDING THE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS, 1926.

At the Court at Buckingham Palace, the 9th day of May, 1926.

PRESENT,

The King's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

Whereas by an Order in Council, dated the 30th day of April, 1926, His Majesty in pursuance of the powers conferred on Him by the Emergency Powers Act, 1920, was pleased to make Regulations called the Emergency Regulations, 1926.

And whereas the said Regulations were amended by an Order in Council dated the 3rd day of May, 1926.

And whereas it is expedient further to amend the said Regulations in manner hereinafter appearing.

Now, Therefore, His Majesty is pleased, by and with the Advice of His Privy Council, to order, and it is hereby ordered, that the following amendment be made in the said Regulations :

After Regulation 13, the following Regulation shall be inserted :—

13*a* (1) Where a Secretary of State has reason to believe that any monies securities or credits have been or are about to be transmitted from outside the United Kingdom to the United Kingdom, or are about to be applied in the United Kingdom on instructions from outside the United Kingdom, for any purpose prejudicial to the public safety or the life of the Community, he may by order prohibit the Bank or person to or with whom the monies securities or credits are or are about to be transmitted deposited or established from paying, transferring or otherwise dealing with any such monies securities or credits without a licence in writing from the Secretary of State.

(2) An order under this Regulation shall remain in force for seven days after it is made, unless previously revoked.

(3) The powers of a Secretary of State under this Regulation may in Scotland be exercised by the Secretary for Scotland.

M. P. A. Hankey.

D.130.

Workers' Bulletin, May 13, 1926.

COMMUNIST PARTY LEAD TO THE WORKERS!

The following statement has been issued to the Press by the Communist Party of Great Britain :—

" The complete capitulation of the General Council of the T.U.C., followed by the counter attack of the employers, has created a most serious situation for the working class. Unions are left isolated and Strike Committees without a national leadership. Deep as the resentment of the workers is against the new attack and the desertion of the General Council there cannot be a successful conduct of the struggle without strong united local councils and a strong national leadership.

The Communist Party, therefore, urges that the Local Strike Committees immediately re-form and convene local conferences of Strike Committees pledged :—

(1) To loyalty to the miners.
(2) To resistance to the new conditions being imposed upon railway, tramway, bus, printing and other workers.
(3) To safeguard the Trade Unions against employers' attacks.
(4) To convene a National Conference of delegates from Strike Committees together with the Union Executives already pledged along the above lines.

Such a National Conference alone can produce a new leadership in keeping with the requirements of the struggle and save the Trade Unions from disaster.

Stick to the Trade Unions. Re-form the ranks and stand firm!

D.131.

T.U.C. AND SEAMEN'S UNION.

" The International Federation of Trade Unions said that an Amsterdam message had received the following reply from the General Council of the T.U.C. regarding the British Seamen's Organisation, which had not joined the General Strike :—

' The T.U.C. condemns the action of all organisations which in any way obstruct or disregard its firm determination to assure the victory of the British Workers.' " B.B.C.

D.132.

B.B.C.

At a meeting with the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street, Mr. Pugh announced on behalf of the Trades Union Congress General Council that the General Strike is being terminated to-day.

We are requested to broadcast the following announcement on behalf of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress :—

"In order to resume negotiations the General Council of the T.U.C. has decided to terminate the General Strike to-day, and telegrams of instructions are being sent to the General Secretaries of all affiliated unions. Members before acting must await the definite instructions from their own Executive Councils."

(Signed) Pugh, *Chairman.*
Citrine, *Secretary.*

At the meeting of the Executive of the Miners' Federation held Wednesday morning at Russell Square, the following resolution was passed :—

"That after hearing the report of the representatives of the T.U.C. we reaffirm our resolution of May 11, and express our profound admiration of the wonderful demonstration of loyalty displayed by all workers who promptly withdrew their labour in support of the miners' standards, and undertake to report fully to a conference, to be convened as early as practicable."

D.134.

The following announcement was issued from Downing Street immediately after the meeting at mid-day, Wednesday, May 12 :—

The Prime Minister, who was accompanied by the Minister of Labour, the Secretary of State for India, the Minister of Health, the Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the Secretary for Mines, received members of the General Council of the T.U.C. at 12.20 to-day at No. 10 Downing Street.

Mr. Pugh announced, on behalf of the General Council of the T.U.C., that the General Strike was being terminated to-day.

D.135.

The following statement was issued by the General Council on Wednesday evening, May 12, to affiliated societies, Trades Councils and Strike Committees :—

The General Council, through the magnificent support and solidarity of the Trade Union movement, has obtained assurances that a settlement of the mining problem can be secured which justifies them in bringing the general stoppage to an end. Conversations have been proceeding between the General Council representatives and Sir Herbert Samuel, Chairman of the Coal Commission, who returned from Italy for the express purpose of offering his services to try to effect a settlement of the differences in the coal mining industry.

The Government had declared that under no circumstances could negotiations take place until the General Strike had been terminated, but the General Council feel, as a result of the conversations with Sir Herbert Samuel and the proposals which are embodied in the correspondence and documents which are enclosed, that sufficient assurances had been obtained as to the lines upon which a settlement could be reached to justify them in terminating the General Strike.

The General Council accordingly decided at their meeting to-day to terminate the general stoppage in order that negotiations could be resumed to secure a settlement in the mining industry, free and unfettered from either strike or lockout. The General Council considered the practicability of securing a resumption of work by the members in dispute at a uniform time and date, but it was felt, having regard to the varied circumstances and practices in each industry, that it would be better for each Executive Council itself to make arrangements for the resumption of work of its own members. The following telegram was dispatched to-day :—

General Council T.U.C. have to-day declared General Strike terminated. Please instruct your members as to resuming work as soon as arrangements can be made. Letter follows.—PUGH, CITRINE.

Throughout the negotiations and during the whole of the stoppage the General Council have declared that they have been fighting to protect the miners against an intolerable degradation of their standard of life and working conditions. It was with this object, and with this object

alone, that the General Council assumed the grave responsibility of calling upon its affiliated organisations to unite in strike action to enforce the cancellation of the lockout notices and the withdrawal of the new wages scale posted in the mining districts. No attack was at any time contemplated upon the established political institutions of the country, and it is a testimony to the loyalty and discipline of the movement that disorders have been practically unknown. The Unions that have maintained so resolutely and unitedly their generous and ungrudging support of the miners can be satisfied that an honourable understanding has been reached.

The General Council accept the consequences of their decision with a full sense of their responsibility, not only to their own membership but to the nation at large. They have endeavoured throughout the crisis to conduct their case as industrial disputes have always been conducted by the British Trade Unions—without violence or aggression. The General Council feel, in taking the last steps to bring the crisis to an end, that the Trade Union movement has given a demonstration to the world of discipline, unity, and loyalty without parallel in the history of industrial disputes.

Yours fraternally,

Arthur Pugh, *Chairman.*
Walter M. Citrine,
Acting Secretary.

D.136.

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

GENERAL STRIKE CALLED OFF FORTHWITH.

PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

APPEAL TO THE NATION.

Mr. Baldwin :

The Trades Union Council came to see me this morning, and told me that they had decided to call off the General Strike forthwith. I said that it would be the immediate effort of myself and my colleagues to bring about a resumption of negotiations of the two parties in the mining industry, with a view to secure the earliest possible settlement. I can only add this at the moment. The peace that I believe has come—the victory that has been won—is a

victory of common-sense, not of any one part of the country, but the common-sense of the best part of the whole of the United Kingdom, and it is of the utmost importance at a moment like this that the whole British people should not look backwards but forwards; that we should resume our work in a spirit of co-operation, putting behind us all malice and vindictiveness.—*Hansard*, May 12.

D.137.

Buckingham Palace.

TO MY PEOPLE.

The nation has just passed through a period of extreme anxiety.

It was to-day announced that the General Strike had been brought to an end.

At such a moment it is supremely important to bring together all my people to confront the difficult situation which still remains.

This task requires the co-operation of all able and well-disposed men in the country.

Even with such help it will be difficult, but it will not be impossible.

Let us forget whatever elements of bitterness the events of the past few days may have created, only remembering how steady and how orderly the country has remained, though severely tested, and forthwith address ourselves to the task of bringing into being a peace which will be lasting because, forgetting the past, it looks only to the future with the hopefulness of a united people.

(Signed) GEORGE R.I.

12th May, 1926.

D.138.

The following message from the Prime Minister was read from the London broadcasting station on the evening of Wednesday, May 12:—

The General Strike is over, though several days will elapse before normal conditions are restored. It has ended, as I made it plain in my speech to the nation a few nights ago that it must end, without conditions entered into

by the Government. No Government confronted by such a menace could enter into a conditional negotiation, the very undertaking of which would involve treachery to the accepted basis of our democratic Constitution.

Having said this, I must make it plain that I adhere both to the spirit and to the letter of the speech which I delivered to the nation a few days ago. Our business is not to triumph over those who have failed in a mistaken attempt. It is rather to rally them together with the population as a whole in an attempt to restore the wellbeing of the nation. I shall without delay enter into negotiations with the object of adjusting those differences between owners and men in the coal trade which had engaged the constant attention of the Government at the moment when the general strike unhappily emerged.

It would not, however, be right that I should let to-night pass, when the menace is over, without expressing the heartfelt thanks of the Government to all those of our countrymen who have supported us in the struggle which is over. We conceived it to be a matter of absolute duty to call upon the whole country to resist the menace of a general strike. The people of these islands responded to that appeal, as in our long history they have answered every claim made upon their love of freedom and sense of fair play. I thank everyone. I hope that my message will go to the whole army of volunteers—men, women, and even children—who have risen up to demonstrate that there is no national service which cannot be discharged even with improvised knowledge by loyal citizens if the national safety requires it.

I thank those who in their thousands responded as special constables, ready to run any risk in order that they might demonstrate that the home of our great race had not forgotten its reverence for law and order. I thank those who have vindicated, I think once for all, the impossibility of silencing the Press of Britain. The editor and the staff, the men and women who have started by motor car every night, travelling through long hours to carry the Government organ throughout the length and

breadth of the country—they have deserved well of us too; and every worker in London who in order, as far as he or she could, to keep the business of the nation in action has walked weary miles to do his or her work during these anxious days has deserved well of the nation too.

Now I must mention with admiration the devotion, courage, and patience shown by the Navy, the Army, the Air Force, and the police throughout the whole of the country. If I do not mention others who have also helped us, it is not because I forget their services, it is because the list is too long. They have served their country well, and those who in their hearts are resolute to serve her well need ask no other praise.

I have only this to add. I never felt any bitterness in my heart, as I realised that sympathy with the miners which we all share was the dominant motive underlying the action of the Trade Unions. That action, on whatever feeling it was based, was unconstitutional in character and directly threatened the safety of the nation. Of this, however, I am certain—that our duty at the moment is to forget all recrimination. Let employers act with generosity. Let workmen put their whole heart loyally into their work. Waste no time in determining who was to blame for anything. Let us set England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland going again.

The Employers' Association and the Trade Unions should meet without delay to adjust the many difficult questions which are bound to arise. The elements in our population which do not desire to see our country grow and prosper under a democratic Constitution are negligible. Let us neglect them, but let the rest of us, men and women alike, whatever view we took of the recent disorder, bind ourselves in a spirit of true comradeship to preserve, develop and maintain the industries of this country on which the fortunes of its citizens so vitally depend.

As I said in the House of Commons this afternoon, it is of the utmost importance that the whole British people should not look backwards but forwards, and resume our work in a spirit of co-operation and goodwill.

(Signed) STANLEY BALDWIN.

D.139.

The following official report of the meeting of the Prime Minister and the T.U.C. representatives at 10 Downing Street was issued on the evening of May 12 :—

The following were present—The Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P., Prime Minister ; the Right Hon. Sir L. Worthington-Evans, Bart., G.B.E., M.P., Secretary of State for War ; the Right Hon. the Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India ; the Right Hon. W. C. Bridgeman, M.P., First Lord of the Admiralty ; the Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., Minister of Health ; the Right Hon. Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, Bart., M.P., Minister of Labour ; Col. the Right Hon. G. R. Lane-Fox, M.P., Secretary for Mines ; Sir Horace J. Wilson, K.C.B., C.B.E., Secretary, Ministry of Labour ; Mr. E. A. Gowers, C.B., Permanent Under Secretary, Mines Department ; Mr. T. Jones, Deputy Secretary, Cabinet Offices ; the Trade Union Congress General Council—Mr. Arthur Pugh, Chairman ; Mr. A. B. Swales, Vice-Chairman ; Mr. W. M. Citrine, Acting General Secretary ; and other members.

The Prime Minister—Mr. Pugh, will you be good enough to make a statement.

Mr. Pugh.—Well, sir, when we separated something over a week ago it was, of course, recognised and expressed on both sides that the ultimate end would be a settlement of this matter by negotiations, and although the conflict has been very much extended and developments have taken place since then, clearly both sides and all sides and all parties have had in view—they must have had—the ultimate arrangements that would have to be made to bring this trouble to a successful end. We, of course, like yourself, have had. Despite whatever developments might have taken place, everybody has had to direct their thoughts in that channel, and to use such opportunities as presented themselves, and such public opinion as existed with a view to effecting a resumption of negotiations. In that respect, sir, your contribution was made in the statement delivered to the people of the country through the wireless stations. That was something which we on our side certainly could not ignore.

On the other hand, we had been exploring other possibilities with full knowledge that, whatever happened, and however long the present position lasted, or whatever might be its consequences, in the long run the process of negotiations would have to be gone through. Well, as a result of developments in that direction and the possibilities that we see in getting back to negotiations, and your assurance, speaking for the general community of citizens as a whole, that no stone should be left unturned to get back to negotiations, we are here to-day, sir, to say that this general strike is to be terminated forthwith, in order that negotiations may proceed, and, we can only hope, may proceed in a manner which will bring about a satisfactory settlement. That is the announcement which my General Council is empowered to make.

The Prime Minister.—That is, the General Strike is to be called off forthwith ?

Mr. Pugh.—Forthwith. That means immediately. There is just a point about the actual arrangement, but that is in effect what it means. It is merely a matter of the best way to get it done with the least confusion.

The Prime Minister.—I mean there would be a great deal of work for both of us to do. All I would say in answer to that is, I thank God for your decision, and I would only say now—I do not think it is a moment for lengthy discussion—I only say now I accept fully and confirm fully all I have said in the last two paragraphs of my broadcasted message. I shall call my Cabinet together forthwith, report to them what you have said, and I shall lose no time in using every endeavour to get the two contending parties together, and do all I can to ensure a just and lasting settlement. I hope it may be possible before long to make a statement of the lines on which we hope to accomplish that end.

Mr. Thomas.—Only one or two of us wish to say anything to you, and it will be very brief. You answered us in the way we knew you would answer us—namely, that just as you recognise we have done a big thing in accepting the responsibility, we felt sure the big thing would be responded to in a big way. We are satisfied all too well that it will not be a day or two or a week in which the dislocation and difficulty can be put right, but whatever may be the view of the merits of the dispute now ending there is common agreement that assistance from those who were opposing parties ten minutes ago is essential to rectify and make good and start things on the right road again. Your assistance in that is necessary ; our assistance is necessary. We intend to give it, and in doing that we believe you can help. We want you to help us in that direction—I never liked the word war, and I do not want to use it, but we want your help when the dispute is ended. We trust your word as Prime Minister. We ask you to assist us in the way you only can assist us—by asking employers and all others to make the position as easy and smooth as possible, because the one thing we must not have is guerilla warfare. That must be avoided, and in that both sides have to contribute immediately. Nothing could be worse than that this great decision which we have taken should be interpreted otherwise than as a general desire to do the right thing in a difficult moment for the industry of the nation.

Mr. Bevin.—I think you will agree in the difficulties we have had before us, at least we have taken a great risk in calling the strike off. I want to urge it must not be regarded as an act of weakness, but rather one of strength. I am not talking of muscle and brawn, but rather that it took a little courage to take the line we have done. I want to stress Mr. Thomas's point, and ask you if you could tell us whether you are prepared to make a general request, as head of the Government, that facilities, etc., ready facilities for reinstatement and that kind of thing, shall be given forthwith. The position is

this. Some of the undertakings that are affected, of course, are affected by associations which are get-at-able ; otherwise they are all over the country. When this goes out in the Press it may cause untold confusion, but if you could agree with us to make a declaration it would, I think, facilitate matters. Employers no doubt have been acting at least in carrying out the spirit of the Government during the fight, naturally, and they would no doubt respond to a statement of that character, and I would put it to you very strongly that that is one of the easiest ways of doing things. One of the reasons I want to put it to you is this. In a dislocation of this character it does affect production very much, especially in producing trades, and if there is a resumption with a sort of good feeling then the thing gets back on to its usual footing very rapidly. If there is not, then it does affect the restoration.

I remember after the 1912 strike, when we were beaten, Sir Joseph Broodbank went into it very carefully, and the loss in output of transport was something like 25 per cent. for some time until the war. We do not want that kind of thing. We have had a row, and it does upset things, but we are quite willing to co-operate with our men to repair the damage just as much as the employers, but the employers are the people who can facilitate that kind of feeling, and I am sure they would respond to you if you issued that as a statement. It would be very helpful to us before we left the building if we could have some indication in that direction, because we shall have to send telegrams to Unions whose headquarters are not in London, with whom we cannot converse, and coupling with it a declaration from yourself would, in a way, give the lead as to how the thing is to be approached.

You said, sir, also you were going to call the parties together in order to effect a just settlement. Now, we have called our show off, and work will be resuming pretty quickly. I do not know whether I am overstepping the bounds, but I would like you to give me an idea of whether that means that there is to be a resumption of the mining negotiations with us, or whether all the negotiations have to be carried on while the miners still remain out.

Mr. Thomas.—That implies that we interpret your speech to mean what I am sure it did mean.

Mr. Bevin.—It helped us to rise to the occasion. I thought personally—of course, it is so difficult when you have to take it without conversing—I really felt in the event of our taking the lead in assuring you we were going to play the game and put our people back, that it was going to be free and unfettered negotiations with the parties very speedily, because thousands of our people cannot go back if the colliers are still out, and if the colliers are still out it is going to make it extremely difficult to get a smooth running of the machine. Those are the two points I wish to put to you.

The Prime Minister.—Well, Mr. Bevin, I cannot say more here at this meeting now. I did not know what points you were going to raise, or that anything would be said beyond the statement of

Mr. Pugh. The point you have put is one I must consider, and I will consider it at once. I would only say, in my view the best thing to do is to get as quickly as possible into touch with the employers. I think that the quicker that is done the less friction there will be. You know my record. You know the object of my policy, and I think you may trust me to consider what has been said with a view to seeing how best we can get the country quickly back in to the condition in which we all want to see it. You will want my co-operation, and I shall want yours to try to make good the damage done to the trade, and try to make this country a little better and a happier place than it has been in recent years. That will be my steady endeavour, and I look to all of you when we are through this for your co-operation in that. I shall do my part, and I have no doubt you will do yours.

In regard to the second point, there, again, I cannot say at this moment what will happen, because I shall have to see the parties. My object, of course, is to get the mines started the first moment possible, and get an agreement reached. I cannot say until I have seen them exactly what the lines will be upon which my object can best be attained, but you may rely on me and rely on the Cabinet that they will see no stone is left unturned to accomplish that end. Now, Mr. Pugh, as I said before, we have both of us got a great deal to do and a great deal of anxious and difficult work, and I think that the sooner you get to your work and the sooner I get to mine the better.

Mr. Pugh.—Yes; that sums up the position for the moment.

Mr. Bevin.—I am a little persistent. I do not want to take up your time, but shall we be meeting on these two points soon?

The Prime Minister.—I cannot say that, Mr. Bevin. I think it may be that whatever decision I come to the House of Commons may be the best place in which to say it. I cannot say at the moment whether the better thing would be to do it there or meet again; but we are going to consider right away what is best.

The proceedings then terminated.

D.140.

PUGH-SAMUEL CORRESPONDENCE.

May 12, 1926.

DEAR MR. PUGH,

As the outcome of the conversations which I had with your Committee, I attach a memorandum embodying the conclusions that have been reached. I have made it clear to your Committee from the outset that I have been acting entirely on my own initiative, have received no authority from the Government, and can give no assurances on their behalf. I am of opinion that the proposals embodied in the memorandum are suitable for adoption, and are likely to promote a settlement of the differences in the coal industry. I shall strongly recommend their acceptance by the Government when the negotiations are renewed.

Yours sincerely, HERBERT SAMUEL.

London, May 12, 1926.

Sir Herbert Samuel.

Dear Sir,

The General Council having carefully considered your letter of to-day, and the memorandum attached to it, concurred in your opinion that it offers a basis on which the negotiations upon the conditions in the coal industry can be renewed.

They are taking the necessary measures to terminate the General Strike, relying upon the public assurances of the Prime Minister as to the steps that would follow. They assume that during the resumed negotiations the subsidy will be renewed and that the lock-out notices to the Miners will be immediately withdrawn.

Yours faithfully,

Arthur Pugh, Chairman.
Walter M. Citrine, Acting Secretary.

D.141.

THE SAMUEL MEMORANDUM.

(1) The negotiations upon the conditions of the coal industry should be resumed, the subsidy being renewed for such reasonable period as may be required for that purpose.

(2) Any negotiations are unlikely to be successful unless they provide for means of settling disputes in the industry other than conferences between the mineowners and the miners alone. A National Wages Board should therefore be established, which would include representatives of those two parties, with a neutral element and an independent chairman. The proposals in this direction tentatively made in the report of the Royal Commission should be pressed, and the powers of the proposed Board enlarged.

(3) The parties to the Board should be entitled to raise before it any points they considered relevant to the issue under discussion, and the Board should be required to take such points into consideration.

(4) There should be no revision of the previous wage rates unless there are sufficient assurances that the measures of reorganisation proposed by the Commission will be effectively adopted.

A Committee should be established, as proposed by the Prime Minister, on which representatives of the men should be included, whose duty it should be to co-operate with the Government in the preparation of the legislative and administrative measures that are required. The same Committee, or alternatively the National Wages Board, should assure itself that the necessary steps, so far as they relate to matters within the industry, are not being neglected or unduly postponed.

(5) After these points have been agreed and the Mines National Wages Board has considered every practicable means of meeting such immediate financial difficulties as exist, it may, if that course is found to be absolutely necessary, proceed to the preparation of a wage agreement.

(6) Any such agreement should

(i.) If practicable, be on simpler lines than those hitherto followed.

(ii.) Not adversely affect in any way the wages of the lowest-paid men.

(iii.) Fix reasonable figures below which the wage of no class of labour, for a normal customary week's work, should be reduced in any circumstances.

(iv.) In the event of any new adjustments being made, should provide for the revision of such adjustments by the Wages Board from time to time if the facts warrant that course.

(7) Measures should be adopted to prevent the recruitment of new workers over the age of 18 years into the industry, if unemployed miners are available.

(8) Workers who are displaced as a consequence of the closing of uneconomic collieries should be provided for by—

(*a*) The transfer of such men as may be mobile, with the Government assistance that may be required, as recommended in the report of the Royal Commission.

(*b*) The maintenance, for such period as may be fixed, of those who cannot be so transferred, and for whom alternative employment cannot be found; this maintenance to comprise an addition to the existing rate of unemployment pay under the Unemployment Insurance Act, of such amount as may be agreed. A contribution should be made by the Treasury to cover the additional sums so disbursed.

(*c*) The rapid construction of new houses to accommodate transferred workers. The Trades Union Congress will facilitate this by consultation and co-operation with all those who are concerned.

D.142.

The following statement was made on Wednesday, May 12, by Sir Herbert Samuel to the Press:—

The deadlock which had arisen was due to a complication of causes. The Government had refused—and rightly, as it seems to me—to enter into negotiations of any kind either with regard to the General Strike or to the coal dispute until the strike had been ended. The Trades Union Council held that they could not end the strike without the expectation that negotiations for a coal settlement would thereupon be resumed, and they held that these negotiations ought not to take place under the very unfavourable conditions that would be created if the coal mines were stopped meanwhile, and the miners were without work. For the mines to resume working it was necessary either for a new wage settlement to be agreed or for the old one to be revived. But a new settlement had not been agreed, and the negotiations were necessary for that

very purpose; under the old settlement a large part of the mines could not afford to reopen without a subsidy.

The Government were prepared to grant a subsidy during a period of negotiation, but made it a condition—again I think quite rightly—that the negotiations should offer a prospect of success. No such prospect was offered so long as the miners continued their rigid refusal to accept any wage reductions at the present time of any kind and under any conditions. This refusal was partly due to a deep suspicion, justified, as they thought, by past experience, that those reductions having once been made little more would be heard in actual practice of many of the measures of reconstruction which were being offered as a reason for their acceptance. It was clear that if these last difficulties could be overcome the solution of the others would follow. The discussions in which I have been engaged have, therefore, been addressed to these points.

The Trade Union Congress General Council has now adopted a possible basis for an understanding on these points, and it has terminated the general strike, in the expectation that the way to a resumption of negotiation has thus been opened. Whether that will be so or not must, in my opinion, necessarily depend upon the Miners' Federation consenting to the basis that has been proposed. If they do not, the position, so far as the mines are concerned, will remain as it was, and the stoppage of the mines will continue. If they do, the Government will, I believe, be fully justified in renewing the subsidy pending negotiations. The mines can then restart, and the discussions that were interrupted be resumed. This is the immediate object to be attained, and the matter at this stage rests entirely with the Miners' Federation.

D.143.

B.B.C., May 12.

Statement by Sir Herbert Samuel :—" If the miners consent to the basis that has been proposed, the Government will, I believe, be fully justified in renewing the subsidy. Pending negotiations, the miners can restart and the discussions that were interrupted be resumed. This is the immediate object to be obtained, and the matter at this stage rests entirely with the Miners' Federation."

D.144.

OFFICIAL T.U.C. ORGAN.

The same evening the *British Worker* contained the following headings :—

GREAT STRIKE TERMINATED.

Trades Union Congress General Council satisfied that Miners will now get a fair deal.

How Peace Came.

Telegrams already sent to all Unions concerned to instruct their Branches at once.

Miners call Delegate Conference.

D.145.

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS.

"The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster asks us to announce that a Te Deum will be sung in Westminster Cathedral after the High Mass at 10.30 to-morrow, Ascension Day, and that he begs his Clergy to offer similar prayers of thanksgiving either to-morrow or on Sunday next."—B.B.C.

Stenographic report of the termination of the General Strike broadcasted at 7 p.m., followed by broadcasting of a message from the King, followed by a message from the Prime Minister at 9.30 p.m., followed by the Valedictory from the British Broadcasting Company, as follows:—

B.B.C. VALEDICTORY.

"Our first feelings on hearing of the termination of the General Strike must be of profound thankfulness to Almighty God Who has led us through this supreme test with National health unimpaired. You have heard the message from the King and the Prime Minister. It remains only to add the conviction that the Nation's happy escape has been in a large measure due to the personal trust in the Prime Minister not misplaced.

As for the B.B.C. we hope your confidence in, and goodwill to us have not suffered. We have laboured under certain difficulties, the full story of which may be told some day. We have tried to help.

In going back to work to-morrow, or the next day, can we not all go as fellow-craftsmen, resolved in the determination to pick up the broken pieces, repair the gaps, and build the walls of a more enduring city—the city revealed to the mystical eyes of William Blake when he wrote:—

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the Holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight;
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Chapter XXIII

THE RALLY

(May 13-17)

Section 1.—May Thirteenth

It became known that the settlement did not involve the withdrawal of the lockout notices to the miners, and that the M.F.G.B. had refused to agree to the settlement. The employers in various industries demanded impossible conditions of reinstatement, and the strike continued without any sign of weakening. The *Times* opens National Police Fund.

After the withdrawal of the General Strike at noon on Wednesday, there were, as the news spread during the afternoon and evening, certain resumptions of work, *e.g.* busses and trams in some of the provincial towns, which led many to think that there would be a general resumption on the morning of Thursday, 13th May. The reverse, however, proved to be the case. And for this there were two reasons. The first was the fact that the miners were still locked out and were continuing the fight, the second was that it became clear that in one place after another employers were endeavouring to impose new conditions of employment. The result was that the General Strike continued unofficially on Thursday morning. The unofficial strike was presently to be reinforced by telegrams from the Transport Unions instructing their members to remain on strike—or rather to come out on strike again—until satisfactory assurances were received from the railway companies.

The British Broadcasting Bulletin throughout that day displayed surprise that work was not resumed.

"Aspect of London unchanged, very few strikers return."

Up to this morning many Union Executives had not issued call for renewal of work, due to technical causes, but neither Government nor employers were making any endeavour to open factory gates. The National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the Transport Workers and a number of others issue instructions to members not to renew work until previous agreements recognised. Railway Companies post notices that in view of breaking of their contract by strikers, all latter are considered dismissed and will be later taken on only on individual contracts. Those not returning by 12 a.m. to-morrow "will be taken back only on terms of new men" (*i.e.* with reductions in wages according to the last agreement). The Executive of three railway unions issued joint instructions to members to continue strike until satisfactory assurances have been received from employers. Except in few cases railwaymen reported as not having returned to work.

General Council issues circular to all unions calling on their members not to sign individual contracts.

Labour Parliamentary Party protests against "unfounded, inaccurate, and provocative statements that the General Council had unconditionally surrendered."

The state of emergency continues in force. Ninety-five persons sentenced to various terms in different parts of the country—including 12 Communists. Member of the Executive of Teachers' Labour League, a Communist, sentenced to two months for provocative speeches.

Dissatisfaction with General Council decision in Poplar.

After statement in House of Commons, Baldwin had interview with Miners' Executive.

Communist Party manifesto issued, headed "Stand behind the Miners," condemns decision of General Council as greatest crime ever perpetrated against miners and working class. Instead of calling on all sections of organised workers to unite in the struggle against the capitalists, the General Council has disgracefully surrendered. The struggle was for defence not only of miners, but of all workers. . . . The Right Wing of the General Council bears the immediate responsibility for leaving the workers defenceless against the capitalists. . . . Throughout the General Strike, the Right Wing consciously avoided every obligation to struggle against a reduction in wages. . . The greater part of the so-called Left Wing no better than the Right. By policy of timid silence, under pretence of loyalty to colleagues, it has been in the hands of the Right Wing and therefore helped the employers to victory. Even now it is afraid to declare itself against the united front of Baldwin-Samuel-Thomas. . . . The C.P. calls on workers not to desert the miners and to reject the shameful deal made in their name. The manifesto puts forward the following slogans:—"Refuse to return to work. Reject the Samuel memorandum. Demand the calling of an extraordinary Conference of Strike Committees and Councils of Action. Force the trade union leaders to continue the struggle. Put forward your own programme. Stand behind the miners. No wage reductions. No longer hours."

D.147.

B.B.C., 10 a.m.

As far as London was concerned, the calling off of the General Strike seemed to have little difference to traffic this morning. Few of the strikers have returned to work and the strike service of trains and buses is still in force, volunteers acting as drivers and conductors. No trams were running in the early morning and the scramble to get to work was as bad as ever. The newspapers again appeared in attenuated form.

While the general strike public as a whole took no pains to

conceal their satisfaction at the calling off of the strike, the action of the T.U.C. seems to have caused some dissatisfaction among some of its adherents. A tour through Canning Town and Poplar shortly before midnight disclosed the fact that the inhabitants of these parts were not at all pleased with the state of affairs. Crowds paraded the streets, but the police kept them on the move, and only in one or two instances was any actual violence threatened. The dockers had withdrawn their pickets from the docks, but the gates remained closed and very little activity was noticeable within them.

A meeting at midnight of Ilford Trade Unionists decided to continue the strike in Ilford in all trades as a protest against the steps alleged to have been taken by the L.N.E. Rly. not to re-employ strikers on the old basis, and the reported decision of the L.G.O.C. not to reinstate employees who have been in the hands of the police.

D.148.

STAND BY THE MINERS!

AN APPEAL BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

The General Council's decision to call off the General Strike is the greatest crime that has ever been permitted, not only against the miners, but against the working class of Great Britain and the whole world. The British workers had aroused the astonishment and admiration of the world by the enthusiasm with which they had entered upon the fight for the miners' standard of living. But, instead of responding to this magnificent lead by a call to every section of organised labour to join the fight against the capitalists, the General Council have miserably thrown itself and the miners on the tender mercies of the workers' worst enemies—the Tory Government.

This was a fight in defence, not only of the miners, but of every worker. Particularly does this apply to the railwaymen and transport workers, whose " high wages " had been menaced by the employers during the Coal Commission. But there is no class of worker that can afford to forget Baldwin's message of July, 1925 : " Wages in every industry must come down."

The Right Wing in the General Council bears direct responsibility for throwing away the workers' weapons and leaving them almost defenceless against the capitalists. Throughout the General Strike they deliberately avoided any pledge to fight against wage reductions. They gave prominence to appeals by Archbishops and County Councils to call off the General Strike without guarantee as to living standards. They suppressed the news that scores, sometimes hundreds of workers were being arrested or batoned for exercising their right of picketing or propaganda. And most of the so-called Left Wing have been no better than the Right. By a policy of timid silence, by using the false pretext of loyalty to colleagues to cover up breaches of loyalty to workers, they have left

a free hand to the Right Wing and thus helped to play the employers' game. Even now they have not the courage to come out openly as a minority in the General Council and join forces with the real majority—the workers—against the united front of Baldwin-Samuel-Thomas.

But the working class is bigger than any leader. If the old leaders turn traitor or coward, the workers are capable of taking charge themselves. They must take charge themselves, if all the effort and courage of this gigantic General Strike are not to be wasted, and if the British capitalists are not to be allowed to smash the trade unions and drive the workers here down to coolie conditions, as they have driven down the German workers. There will be talk of loyalty and discipline. The Communist Party declares that the greatest loyalty is loyalty to the working class; the finest discipline is one that helps the workers to beat the bosses, not the bosses to smash the workers.

Therefore, the Communist Party asks the miners not to despair of their fellow-workers, but to hold on and appeal for support to them.

The Communist Party calls upon all its members, upon those who have realised by experience that the Communists were right and that the Reformists were wrong in their estimation, months ago, of the bosses' intentions, and upon every class-conscious worker, to press for immediate emergency meetings of all Strike Committees and Councils of Action, with a view to continuing the struggle and forcing the leaders to do so. It heartily supports the Minority Movement's Campaign for a simultaneous move forward, not only to defend the miners, but also to advance the claims already put forward in a number of the chief industries.

Refuse to Return to Work! Repudiate the Samuel Memorandum! Demand Emergency Conferences of Strike Committees and Councils of Action! Force the Union Leaders to continue the Fight! Put forward your own Programmes! Stand by the Miners! No Reductions—No Longer Hours!

D.149.

BALDWIN ON THURSDAY EVENING.

The supreme interest of this country to-day requires that the largest body of men possible should be brought back to work at the earliest possible moment. I take that as the starting point. I repeat now in other words perhaps what I have said more than once. But this is neither the occasion for malice, nor for recrimination, nor for triumph. . . . I have given no pledges at all during this conflict, except one, and that is that those who help the Government should not suffer for having done so. . . . Therefore there is a real difficulty in reconciling a pledge of that kind and the taking back of all men to work. . . . What I want to say is this. I will not countenance any attack on the part of any employers to use this present occasion for trying in any way to get reductions in wages

below those in force before the strike or any increase of hours. . . .

The leader of the Opposition devoted a portion of his speech to saying that he hoped that there would be no attack on trade unions as such. I cannot imagine that there will be such an attack. I should not countenance such an attack. There must be, human nature being what it is, for a few days at any rate on both sides, I daresay, a soreness, a certain difficulty of recovering in a moment that friendly spirit of negotiation. There can be no greater disaster than that there should be anarchy in the trade union world. It would be impossible in our highly-organised and highly-developed system of industry to carry on unless you had organisations which could speak for and bind the parties on both sides. If you had not that, you would have sporadic outbreaks difficult to deal with, and far more interruptive of ordinary industry. One of the dangers of the situation as I see it, if this situation is allowed to last, is that it may well be that on both sides such organisations will lose their power and that you do run a risk of anarchy in the organisation of both sides. We know that in all these great organisations there are some who are of little help. At a time like this there are some who like fishing in troubled waters. *Let us get the workers calm as soon as we can, lest their work spoils the work of half a century.*

Hansard, broadcasted by B.B.C.

D.150.

The following statement was issued by the General Council on Thursday, May 13 :—

The T.U.C. Council have been considering to-day the reports received from many parts of the country that some employers are attempting to enforce humiliating terms as conditions of the work-people resuming their work. Telegrams have therefore been sent to the affiliated Unions declaring that it is imperative that agreements, understandings, and conditions existing prior to the dispute should be maintained. Another telegram has been sent calling attention to the Prime Minister's statement broadcast last night that employers and employers' associations and Trade Union representatives should meet forthwith for the purpose of arranging a resumption of work. This telegram therefore instructs the Unions to get into touch with the employers, and to report results.

The following statement of the position has been agreed upon :— The General Council called off the General Strike in the confidence that the Prime Minister meant what he said when he asked for a resumption of the negotiations towards an honourable peace. Peace depends upon the employers abstaining from attempts at victimisation. It depends upon their declining to follow the example some are setting of using their position to attack the position of Trade Unionism. The effect will be that the Unions for self-protection will be compelled to offer the most stubborn resistance. The whole

purpose expressed by the Prime Minister will be made null and void if this occurs. The Government, if it means what the Prime Minister said, must stop this attack on Trade Unionism. It must demand that the employers abstain from victimisation. Unless this obligation is fulfilled, the Trade Unions will have no alternative but to resist to the uttermost. Their resistive capacity is unimpaired. They cannot tolerate the imposition of conditions which attempt their destruction.

The good faith of the Prime Minister is involved. Peace without vindictiveness is impossible unless this attack ceases. A vindictive peace only means a new struggle. We need acts and not words if work is to be resumed. The workers will not surrender their hard-won gains for many years. The Government has stated it does not desire this. Let it act firmly and quickly to that end. Those employers who imagine that the calling off the general Strike means the failure of the Trade Union movement are making the mistake of their lives. Many are trying to impose vindictive terms on the workers. They are trying to compel men to sign humiliating documents. They are trying to beat down wages. They are making a mistake. If they persist in such action they will find their mistake out. They will find that the spirit of the British worker is not only unbroken but unbreakable. They are breaking an obligation of honour.

The General Council made the way clear for an honourable peace by calling off the general strike. It did so on the understanding that the spirit of this action would be reciprocated by the other side. It did so in reliance on the public assurances of the Prime Minister that he would foster the spirit of peace. It was evidence of the genuine belief that peace on terms honourable to the whole movement and the whole nation was obtainable. The General Council responded to the Prime Minister's appeal. Much depends upon how far he is prepared to back up that speech by action. If he will use all his influence to see that no employer tries to victimise and humiliate the workers, then peace may be saved. If not, let there be no mistake. The Trade Union movement is not suing for mercy. It is prepared to help the peace as man to man. It is not beaten, and it is not broken. Its strength is unimpaired, and reinforced by the solidarity which the response to the general strike revealed. If one class of employers, misrepresenting the calling off of the strike, thinks it can seize the opportunity to disrupt and degrade the Trade Union movement, the situation is grave indeed, for to that the movement cannot and will not submit. The only alternative to that grave situation is peace honourably made and honourably kept on both sides. The General Council is doing all it can to remove bitterness and friction, and there is evidence that the tone which was prevalent early this morning is changing.

D.151.

The following message was sent by the General Council to all

Unions which took part in the strike on Thursday, May 13 :—

Fellow Trade Unionists :

The General Strike is ended. It has not failed. It has made possible the resumption of negotiations in the coal industry and the continuance during the negotiations of the financial assistance given by the Government. You came out together in accordance with the instructions of the Executives of your Union. Return together on their instructions as and when they are given. Some employers will approach you as individuals with the demand that you should accept conditions different from those obtaining before the stoppage began. Sign no individual agreement. Consult your Union officials, and stand by their instructions. Your Union will protect you, and will insist that all agreements previously in force shall be maintained intact. The Trade Union movement has demonstrated its unity. That unity remains unimpaired. Stick to your Unions.

(Signed) General Council,

Trades Union Congress.

Section 2.—May Fourteenth

The Prime Minister sent to the Miners and the Owners proposals which, in his opinion, formed a fair basis for a settlement. They differed from the proposals set out in the Samuel Memorandum. All the railway unions accepted the terms proposed by the Railway Companies and settlements were also reached in other industries. The Delegate Conference of the Miners' Federation met in London, and was adjourned till Thursday, May 20. The correspondence that was carefully exchanged between Sir Arthur Steel Maitland (one of the Cabinet) and Sir Herbert Samuel on the 8th and 9th May, with regard to the "conversations" which the latter had initiated with the T.U.C., was made public to-day.

The British Broadcasting Company begin : "While there were no further disturbances there is as yet no general resumption of work."

Western Mail (South Wales daily paper, owned by the Berry Coal Combine, the successors to Lord Rhondda) calls for dissolution of Communist Party and Minority Movement as illegal organisations.

Railway strike ends with the agreement between the Companies and the Unions, as follows :—(1) Workers to be taken back as fast as transport restored ; (2) Unions admit that in declaring strike they acted wrongfully ; (3) Unions promise never again to declare strike without preliminary negotiations with companies ; (4) Unions promise never again to influence workers of higher ranks to break their agreements ; (5) Companies agree to remove notices posted yesterday and not to cut wages ; (6) Persons " guilty of violence or intimidation " excluded from the settlement.

Similar conditions signed by London tramway employees, which includes clause that strike-breakers shall retain their posts.

Delegate Conference of Miners' Federation meets, hears report of Executive on negotiations with Baldwin, and discusses Samuel Memorandum. It approves position taken by E.C. and declares against wage reductions and then adjourns to the following day.

The plan proposed by Baldwin for agreement between mineowners and miners provides for during present session of Parliament :—(1) fusion of pits ; (2) special tax on royalties. The plan also provides for (3) limitation of the recruiting of new workers in the industry ; (4) formation of a National Wage Board ; (5) formation of a Coal and Power Station Council with representation of workers on it ; (6) appointment of committee for working out proposals of Coal Commission on distribution of profits ; (7) elaboration of plans for help for unemployed miners ; (8) formation of committee to deal with housing problems in mining regions. Plan also states that Government will afford

further financial assistance to coal industry to amount of about £3,000,000. Plan anticipates the lowering of national wage minimum.

D.153.

(*Terms agreed to on Friday, May* 14) :—

1.—Those employees of the Railway Companies who have gone out on strike to be taken back to work as soon as traffic offers and work can be found for them. The principle to be followed in reinstating to be seniority in each grade at each station, depot, or office.

2. The Trade Unions admit that, in calling a strike, they committed a wrongful act against the Companies, and agree that the Companies do not, by reinstatement, surrender their legal rights to claim damages arising out of the strike from strikers and others responsible.

3. The Unions undertake—

(*a*) Not again to instruct their members to strike without previous negotiations with the Company.

(*b*) To give no support of any kind to their members to take any unauthorised action.

(*c*) Not to encourage supervisory employees in the special class to take part in any strike.

4. The Company intimate that, arising out of the strike, it may be necessary to remove certain persons to other positions, but no such persons' salaries or wages will be reduced. Each Company will notify the Union within one week the names of men whom they propose to transfer, and will afford each man an opportunity of having an advocate to present his case to the general manager.

5. The settlement shall not extend to persons who have been guilty of violence or intimidation.

(Signed)

On behalf of the General Managers' Conference :

Felix J. C. Pole
H. A. Walker.
R. H. Selbie.
H. G. Burgess.
R. L. Wedgwood.

On behalf of the Railway Unions—

J. H. Thomas and C. T. Cramp, National Union of Railwaymen.

J. Bromley, Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen.

A. G. Walkden, Railway Clerks' Association.

D.154.

May 8, 1926.

MY DEAR SAMUEL,—It has occurred to me since our conversation this afternoon that in dealing with a matter so delicate it would be better to place upon record in writing the attitude of the Government as I understand it.

We have repeatedly stated that we cannot negotiate until the General Strike has been withdrawn. This statement has a very particular meaning. It means that until the necessary orders have been given to withdraw the strike, or unless the strike has come to an end, we cannot, as a condition or inducement, take part in negotiations in relation to the mining issue. For if we did so, there would and could be no unconditional withdrawal of the strike notices.

On the contrary, the true situation sincerely faced would be that we had procured the end of the general strike by a process of bargaining. The consent to do this would, in fact, fatally disable the Government for a task which, as trustees of the community, they conceive themselves bound to undertake. Their position is plain. They hold that the general strike is unconstitutional and illegal. They are bound to take steps to make its repetition impossible.

It is therefore plain that they cannot enter upon any negotiations unless the strike is so unreservedly concluded that there is not even an implication of such a bargain upon their side as would embarrass them in any legislation which they may conceive to be proper in the light of recent events.

In these circumstances, I am sure that the Government will take the view that, while they are bound most carefully and most sympathetically to consider the terms of any arrangement which a public man of your responsibility and experience may propose, it is imperative to make it plain that any discussion which you think proper to initiate is not clothed in even a vestige of official character.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) ARTHUR STEEL-MAITLAND.

The Right Hon. Sir Herbert Samuel, G.B.E.

The Reform Club, May 9, 1926.

MY DEAR STEEL-MAITLAND,—I have duly received your letter of yesterday. Let me take this opportunity to put on record the assurance I gave you in conversation that in the discussions which I

have had on the present situation I have made it perfectly clear that I have been acting entirely on my own initiative, and without any kind of authorisation from the Government.

I am quite satisfied that there has been no possibility of misunderstanding on that point.

In any further conversations that may take place I shall, of course, maintain the same attitude.—Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Herbert Samuel.

D.155.

The following statement was issued by the Government on Friday, May 14 :—

The Prime Minister has addressed the following letter to Mr. Evan Williams and Mr. Herbert Smith :—

Enclosed you will find an outline of proposals which, in the opinion of H.M. Government, should provide a reasonable basis for the settlement of the dispute in the coal mining industry on the lines of the Royal Commission's report. I trust both sides may see their way to accept them. It is not necessary for me to urge your Association (Federation) in the present grave circumstances to give their most earnest consideration to these proposals, and I shall not expect a reply before Monday at earliest.

PROPOSALS FOR SETTLEMENT OF MINING DISPUTE ON LINES OF ROYAL COMMISSION'S REPORT.

1.—In accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission, all practicable means for improving the organisation of the industry and increasing its efficiency shall be adopted.

2.—The Government shall take the following immediate action :

(*a*) Introduce and endeavour to pass this session—
  (i.) A Bill to give effect to the proposals of the Commission regarding amalgamations.
  (ii.) A Bill to provide for a welfare levy on royalty owners and to further the establishment of pithead baths.
  (iii.) A Bill to restrict recruitment in mines.
  (iv.) A Bill to set up for the coal mining industry a National Wages Board on the lines of the Railway Wages Board.

(*b*) Set up the proposed National Fuel and Power Council, which will contain representatives of Labour.

(*c*) Set up the proposed Waggon Committee.

(*d*) Appoint a Committee to investigate the question of selling syndicates.

(*e*) Appoint a committee to examine the profit-sharing proposals of the Commission and family allowances.

(*f*) Prepare a scheme for the establishment of Pit Committees.

(*g*) Prepare plans for the assistance of men displaced from pits.

(*h*) Set up a committee on housing in colliery districts.

3. Coal Advisory Committee.—Before any legislation is introduced or Committee set up or other definite step taken by the Government towards giving effect to any of the recommendations of the Commission, a full statement of the step proposed shall be laid before the Coal Advisory Committee by the Secretary for Mines.

It shall also be the duty of the Advisory Committee to review, from time to time, the progress made in giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission, and to make recommendations on the subject.

In the event of any recommendations made by the Committee not being adopted by the Secretary for Mines, he shall lay them before Parliament, together with a statement of his reasons for not adopting them.

4.—Apart from any expenditure that may be necessary under 2 (*g*), the Government will provide further financial assistance to the industry to the amount of approximately £3,000,000.

5.—For a period not exceeding —— weeks :

(i.) The miners will accept a reduction of —— per cent. in minimum wages (other than subsistence rates) in all districts.

(ii.) The owners will bear wages equivalent to 100 per cent. of ascertained net proceeds (in January-March) so far as necessary to maintain those wages.

(iii.) The Government will fill the gap with a subsidy to be debited against the £3,000,000 aforesaid.

6.—In the meantime :—

(i.) A Board shall be set up consisting of three representatives of the coal owners and three representatives of the miners, with an independent chairman.

(ii.) The Board shall frame a national wages and hours agreement governing the principles on which the general wage rates should be ascertained in each district, and shall also decide the minimum percentage on basis, taking into consideration the state and prospects of trade, the reorganisation proposals of the Commission, and other relevant factors.

(iii.) Subsistence wages shall not be reduced in any district where they at present yield 45/- per week or less for a full customary week.

(iv.) The Board shall decide also what the districts shall be.

(v.) The Board shall issue its decision within three weeks.

(vi.) In the event of disagreement in respect of wages, the decision shall rest with the independent chairman.

7.—If the parties agree that it is advisable that some temporary modification should be made in the statutory hours of work, the

Government will propose the necessary legislation forthwith, and give facilities for its immediate passage.

8.—Any balance of the £3,000,000 aforesaid will be available for a " tapering " subsidy after the period referred to in paragraph 5, or such other purpose as may be agreed upon between the Government, the Mining Association, and Miners' Federation.

9.—The provisional undertakings made by the Government in this memorandum are conditional on the acceptance of its terms by the other parties.

D.156.

The Agreement, published on May 17, stating the terms on which London Dock Workers resumed work :—

(1) The Port employers in London will re-engage labour on the terms of the National Agreement which the Unions admit they have broken.

(2) The men to present themselves for work at their usual places of engagement at 7.45 a.m. on Monday, May 17, 1926.

(3) Employers will take on as many men as work is available for.

(4) Permanent men, whether supervisory or labourers, shall be reinstated in their former positions on resumption of work.

(5) The Union undertakes :—

(*a*) Not in future to instruct their members to strike, either nationally, sectionally, or locally for any reason without exhausting the conciliation machinery of the National Agreement.

(*b*) Not to support or encourage any of their members who take individual action contrary to the preceding clause.

(*c*) To instruct their members in any future dispute to refrain from any attempt to influence men in certain supervisory grades (to be specified hereafter) to take strike action.

(6) After general resumption of work, any arrears of pay due to men at the time of the stoppage, to be repaid.

(7) Fhe Stevedores' Agreement of February 28, 1924, is maintained as regards Stevedores, as amplified by this agreement.

(Signed for the Port Employers, the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the Stevedores),

Chapter XXIV

CONCLUSION

I have tried in the second part of the book to present the most significant documents of the General Strike, stripped of commentary or exposition. It only remains to draw attention to two things that are not adequately revealed by any documents, the one relating to trade union officials, the other to the workers who elect them.

It should be understood that the General Council, elected from its constituent industrial groups, does not readily reflect a difference of policy that may have shewn itself within the ranks of the workers. There are no consistent groupings within the General Council, no fixed Left, Right and Centre. Further, the sessions of the General Council are all secret sessions. There is not even a record available to the Trade Unions of what decisions are taken and how the members voted. Nevertheless, in the course of the years succeeding the debacle of the Triple Industrial Alliance in 1921, the situation of the working class and of the governing class were bound to be reflected in the General Council, at any rate in the shape of tendencies this way or that way. By 1925, therefore, individual members were spoken of as Right Wing and Left Wing, though the extent of their difference on any given question was never brought into public debate. Etiquette forbade it; and, perhaps, disinclination as well. Knowledge of the existence of this Left Wing was at once a stimulant and a narcotic for the masses. It gave them a rallying ground, lent confidence to their leftward mood; but, then, it put vigilance to

sleep, and led to overtrustfulness. So that when the breakdown of May 12 came, workers in the localities were looking at one another in dismay, naming the individual leaders of the Left and complaining that it was these men who were responsible in chief.

Into the merits of this question of responsibility this book cannot enter. The point which should be clearly understood is that the General Strike, and the manner of its ending, had definitely ranged the Left along with the Right, had wrought complete solidarity amongst the General Council members, and where the powerful influence of the bureaucracy of the trade union movement had been weakened or divided, it was now (apart from the miners) to be built up as a consolidated influence. That influence was henceforth to be thrown in the scale against a revolutionary policy.

The second thing to which attention must be drawn was also a consolidation, but of a vastly different kind. The working-class movement of Great Britain has been aptly described as a mosaic, a collection of little bits, split off and separated from one another. That mosaic existed up to May of this year; and it exists again now, after May. But for a few short days that mosaic disappeared and its place was taken by something of another order. In the strike there appeared something which had not been known before—Unity—but which, once known, can easily be found again. This unity was attained by the action of the workers themselves, despite their organisations, despite the chains of traditions, habits, separateness, sectionalism, etc., etc. This consolidation of the workers, however temporary, was the most significant feature of the whole General Strike.